Table of Contents

1. Allegiances
2. Prologue
3. Chapter 1
4. Chapter 2
5. Chapter 3
6. Chapter 4
7. Chapter 5
8. Chapter 6
9. Chapter 7
10. Chapter 8
11. Chapter 9
12. Chapter 10
13. Chapter 11
14. Chapter 12
15. Chapter 13
16. Chapter 14
17. Chapter 15
18. Chapter 16
19. Chapter 17
20. Chapter 18
21. Chapter 19
22. Chapter 20
23. Chapter 21
24. Chapter 22
25. Epilogue

Allegiances

DAWNCLAN

Leader:

Fogstar- she-cat with long gray pelt and yellow eyes

Deputy:

Icefoot- white tom with blue eyes

Medicine Cat:

Feathermoon- she-cat with creamy white and gray pelt and blue eyes

Warriors: *(Toms, and she-cats without kits)*

Blueheart- blue-gray she-cat with piercing blue eyes

Starlingstrike- golden-brown tabby tom

Tigerfang- white and gray striped tom (Apprentice, Fallenpaw)

Dustflight- sleek light gray tom (Apprentice, Spotpaw)

Rubyfoot- pale ginger she-cat

Sharpwhisker- tortoiseshell she-cat with long whiskers (Apprentice, Whitepaw)

Swiftheart- very agile tabby tom

Rockclaw- white and brown spotted tom

Apprentices: *(more than six moons old, in training to become warriors)*

Fallenpaw- brown tom, amber eyes

Spotpaw- black tom with a small white dot on his forehead

Whitepaw- silver she-cat with white patches

Queens: *(she-cats expecting or nursing kits)*

Lilycloud- short red-brown she-cat (Mate: Starlingstrike)

Blackstream- black and white she-cat (Kits: Bravekit- gray and white tabby she-kit with blue eyes, and Flowerkit- black and white she-kit with green eyes.) (Mate: Tigerfang)

Littleshell- white tortoiseshell she-cat (Kits: Icykit- pure white tom with green eyes, and Meadowkit- sandy colored she-kit with green eyes) (Mate: Icefoot)

Elders: *(former warriors and queens, now retired)*

Charredfur- black and gray tom

Sleepyeye- pale gray she-cat who spends most of her time sleeping

SUNCLAN

Leader:

Rainstar- dark gray tom with dark amber eyes

Deputy:

Dayheart- dark ginger she-cat

Medicine Cat:

Silverleaf- silver tabby she-cat (Apprentice, Smallpaw- tortoiseshell she-cat with a short tail)

Warriors:

Woodfur- tan colored she-cat (Apprentice, Stickypaw- light gray and white tom)

Cloudheart- white tom with specks of gray

Sparrowflight- dark brown tom, amber eyes

Shadowtail- large, gray tabby tom (Apprentice, Cliffpaw- pale ginger tom)

Littleleap- short legged white she-cat (Apprentice, Shadepaw- gray she-cat)

Queens:

Spottedtail- white she-cat with brown spots (Kits: Twigkit- dark brown tom, Snowkit- white and gray tom, and Larkkit- light brown she-kit with a black underbelly) (Mate: Cloudheart)

Elders:

Tanglepelt- long haired tabby tom

Small-leaf- recently retired tortoiseshell queen

DUSKCLAN

Leader:

Smokestar- gray tom with bright green eyes

Deputy:

Thunderstep- huge black tom with a white underbelly

Medicine Cat:

Thrushtail- dark tortoiseshell she-cat

Warriors:

Longclaw- ginger tom with unusually long claws (Apprentice, Darkpaw- black and gray tom)

Raveneye- brown tabby tom (Apprentice, Dirtpaw- dark brown tom)

Nightfern- jet-black she-cat with distinctive green eyes

Largefang- white and ginger tom

Yellowshell- white she-cat with yellow eyes (Apprentice, Clearpaw- white tabby she-cat)

Queens:

Watereye- gray and white she-cat with beautiful blue, water-like eyes (Mate: Thunderstep)

Bluepool- dark gray she-cat (Kits: Fernkit- dark gray and white she-kit, and Skykit- white and ginger tom) (Mate: Largefang)

Elders:

Shadepool- very old gray she-cat

Grumblefang- cranky old black tom

Petalsong- tortoiseshell she-cat

MOONCLAN

Leader:

Shiverstar- white and ginger tom with golden eyes, shivers uncontrollably

Deputy:

Shadowscratch- gray tom, huge black paws (Apprentice, Amberpaw- ginger she-cat)

Medicine Cat:

Poppyleaf- long haired white and black she-cat (Apprentice, Cloverpaw- brown she-cat mottled with white)

Warriors:

Yellowtail- pale ginger she-cat (Apprentice, Mudpaw- light brown tom)

Windyshell- small tortoiseshell she-cat (Apprentice, Rustpaw- dark ginger tom)

Crowtalon- large tabby tom with bird-like eyes (Apprentice, Marshpaw- light brown and white tom)

Lightningblaze- white tom with blue eyes, partially deaf, but has excellent eyesight

Troutfur- silvery dark gray tom with amber eyes

Treeleg- dark brown tom with long legs

Queens:

Rosefur- red-orange she-cat (Kits: Palekit- cream colored she-kit) (Mate: Lightningblaze)

Silverflower- gray she-cat (Kits: Mistkit- light gray she-kit with dark gray patches, and Graykit- gray tom with green eyes) (Mate: Troutfur)

Elders:

Flamefur- long haired ginger tom

Smallnose- white and gray she-cat with a tiny muzzle

CATS OUTSIDE THE CLANS

Abby- sweet, curious she-cat who lives in the twoleg settlement near DawnClan camp; a kittypet

Sugar- a grouchy white she-cat who is the sister of Abby; a kittypet

Max- brother of Abby and Sugar, playful tom; a kittypet

Flare- dark ginger tom with amber eyes; a loner

Fang- tabby she-cat with green eyes; a rogue

Prologue

A loud yowl echoed throughout the air as Rainstar, the SunClan leader, stepped forward to make an announcement for the Gathering.

"Cats of all Clans," he began. "There has been trouble in the mountains. Mini rockslides keep threatening to destroy our camp. Could this be a sign from Starclan?"

"I cannot say," Fogstar, the DawnClan leader, admitted. "But, our medicine cat received a prophecy directly from StarClan less than half a moon ago. It is urgent and we believe that we must take precautions immediately." The gray she-cat nodded to the DawnClan medicine cat, Feathermoon, who stood so that she could address the other Clans.

Feathermoon's body trembled as she made her way to the edge of the Moon Spring. She scrambled up onto one of the four Great Stones, the DawnClan Great Stone, so she could stand next to her leader. She tried as hard as she could to steady the shaking in her limbs.

"The prophecy was given to me in a dream by a StarClan warrior. He went by the name of Firestar," Feathermoon began, taking a moment to look around at the mass of cats below her.

"He said he was an ancestor of our Clans," she continued. "He lead a Clan called ThunderClan many, many moons ago in a different forest than our own. He told me that this forest is in terrible danger." She expected to hear meows of fear and outrage, but all stayed relatively calm.

"What was the prophecy?" A DuskClan cat called out.

"Firestar said: "Courage will prove itself at the claws of its own Clanmate, warrior will turn against leader, and the forest will be ripped apart." He said that great destruction is coming to our Clans,"

Feathermoon meowed, pausing so that her words could sink in.

Murmuring erupted from the cats below. Some began to panic, while others were confused.

"Wait," Feathermoon called out. "There is an exception."

The murmuring between the cats didn't seem to quiet down, and Feathermoon was forced to wait before she could proceed speaking.

"Tell us, Feathermoon, what is the exception?" Smokestar, the leader of DuskClan, asked. Feathermoon could hear the curiosity in his voice. At his words, the rest of the forest cats began to simmer down.

Feathermoon took a deep breath before speaking.

"Firestar spoke of a kit that will be born with more courage than that of the entire forest. He said that this kit would be the only way to save the existence of the Clans."

Meows of question and worry floated into the air as the Clan cats tried to figure out what it all meant.

"So who is this kit?"

"Which Clan will it be born into?"

"How will we know when this kit is born?"

Questions were thrown at the DawnClan medicine cat, and she had to admit, she didn't know how to answer most of them.

"Quiet!" Rainstar bellowed. The chatter of the forest cats immediately ceased.

"I do not know how to answer most of your questions. I gave you all the information I was given, thank you." With that, the medicine cat leaped down from the Great Stone and moved back to sit with her Clan.

"Well, what are we to do about this?" A cat from SunClan shouted.

"We wait," Fogstar answered.

"Wait?" Shiverstar, who now finally decided to speak up, asked with disbelief. "What good will waiting do us? We must do something!"

"There is nothing we can do, Shiverstar. The kit has not been born yet, and there is no escape from what is to come. We just have to wait until something happens," Fogstar meowed, remaining as calm as she could be.

"Fine. You can wait. You can wait and *die,* but as for my Clan, we're taking action."

"By doing what? What do you think you can possibly do to escape the prophecy?" Smokestar asked.

"We will leave the forest." Shiverstar mewed, holding his head high.

Gasps echoed throughout the group of cats. Some stood up and began to yowl in protest.

"Shiverstar, have you gone mad?" Rainstar asked, anger and disbelief dripping from his tongue.

"I've gone mad?" Shiverstar exclaimed, stepping onto the edge of the rock he was standing on. "At least I'm not crazy enough to stay here and wait around for my Clan to be ripped to shreds!"

Silence followed the MoonClan cat's words.

"Shiverstar," Fogstar began, her voice calm and steady. "No Clan will be ripped to shreds. The kit will save us, and its Clan will make sure of that."

Shiverstar stayed silent for a moment, as if he were deciding whether he should believe Fogstar or not.

"Fine," he reluctantly spat. In one single bound, he leaped off of the MoonClan Great Stone, signaling the end of the Gathering.

Feathermoon watched as Fogstar leapt from her own rock, as well as the other leaders. They returned to their Clans and prepared for

the walk home.

"I wonder which Clan the kit will be born into," Feathermoon heard one of her Clanmates say. It was Icefoot, the current deputy of her Clan.

"We have only so much time before we find out," Fogstar replied.

The Clan cats traveled down the steep mountainside in silence. Their pace was slow, but steady.

They arrived at the base of the mountain, where they were greeted by a thick mass of trees. This was the forest, which stretched all the way around the mountains as far as a cat could see.

Rain began to pour on the forest cats, soaking them to the bone. Feathermoon shivered and pressed against the slippery pelts of her clanmates as they walked.

As soon as the cats entered their camp, Feathermoon could immediately sense something urgent was happening. She bounded forward toward the nursery, where she could hear pained groaning coming from inside the walls.

Before she could enter, Feathermoon was met by a fellow Clanmate, Littleshell.

"Feathermoon!" she exclaimed. The urgency in her voice almost scared Feathermoon. "Hurry, quick, Blackstream is delivering her kits already!"

"What about *your* kits? Where are they?" Feathermoon asked as she began to hastily make her way towards the nursery.

"Icykit's fine; he's in his nest, but Meadowkit won't leave Blackstream alone," Littleshell answered as she began walking quickly to the nursery.

Feathermoon followed the queen into the nursery, where Blackstream was lying on her side, her flanks heaving and her face twisted in pain. Feathermoon was glad to finally be out of the freezing rain, but she focused her attention on the kitting queen in

front of her.

"There, there, calm down. Breathe," Feathermoon whispered to the dark she-cat. Her words seemed to soothe the queen, but only slightly.

Meadowkit was sitting beside Blackstream, her green eyes wide with worry.

"Don't worry," Feathermoon assured her. "She'll be alright. She's strong." Meadowkit nodded and focused her gaze on Blackstream, her eyes now willing the queen to make it through her kitting.

Littleshell came up behind Feathermoon. "Don't you need herbs?" she asked frantically.

"There's no time, the kits are coming now," Feathermoon replied quickly. As the words left her mouth, a tiny body slipped out into the soft moss. A shudder went through Blackstream's body.

"Lick, Littleshell," the medicine cat ordered. The queen immediately began scraping her tongue along the kit's slimy body to keep it warm.

A second kit slid out into the soft nest. As soon as it did, a flash of lightning lit up the nursery, followed by a crack of thunder. The sudden noise made Feathermoon jump, but she quickly aimed her focus back on the newest kit.

Except, the kit wasn't there anymore. It was replaced by a broad, full grown she-cat. She was curled in a bundle, like a sleeping kit, but blood stained her white and gray striped pelt. Another cat was rearing up on his hind legs behind her, about to strike a fatal blow, but the cat was faceless and colorless. Feathermoon could not see who it was.

"Feathermoon!" Littleshell mewed, shaking the medicine cat from her vision. She looked back and saw a small kit again, this time suckling against her mothers belly.

"They're wonderful," Blackstream breathed. Meadowkit purred, followed by Littleshell. Feathermoon purred with them, but it was

only half-hearted. She couldn't stop thinking about the vision she'd just received.

Tigerfang, Blackstream's mate, slid into the nursery. He was holding a small white flower in his jaws, carefully.

A faint mew escaped the queens mouth as soon as she saw the flower he was carrying. Tigerfang nestled the flower next to one of the kits, a black and white one, and bent down to give both kits a gentle lick.

"They're perfect," he whispered. Blackstream nodded as she gazed lovingly at her kits.

"What will you name them?" Feathermoon asked softly.

Blackstream looked up at the medicine cat with tired eyes, and then back down at her new kits.

"This one," she said, pointing at the black and white bundle. "Will be Flowerkit, for the flower Tigerfang brought for her," she answered. Feathermoon nodded.

"And for the other, she will be called Bravekit, for the bravery I needed to have to give birth to her and her sister, especially without having any herbs to help me."

Feathermoon looked down at Bravekit, her white and gray striped body rising softly as she breathed.

The prophecy, the lightning, the vision; it all went together like puzzle pieces. Feathermoon knew that this was the kit Firestar had spoken of. It had to be.

The vision Feathermoon was given haunted her mind. It made it seem as if Bravekit would face certain death.

How would she save the Clans if she was going to die?

Chapter 1

Bravekit sat at the entrance to the nursery, watching longingly as Fallenpaw and Spotpaw headed out on a hunting patrol with Tigerfang and Dustflight, their mentors. Swiftheart tagged along at the last minute.

"I wish we were apprentices already," She mewed to her sister, Flowerkit, who was seated next to her.

"Me too," Flowerkit agreed. "Only five more moons," she reminded her sister. Five moons felt more like a lifetime.

Bravekit scanned the clearing. Rubyfoot and Blueheart sat in front of the warrior's den, both of them enjoying a piece of fresh-kill. Charredfur and Sleepyeye, the two elders in the Clan, shared tongues in the middle of the camp. Sharpwhisker and her apprentice, Whitepaw, made their out of camp, on their way to the training hollow.

Bravekit only wished she could be doing something more important than sitting around by the nursery on such a beautiful newleaf morning. The thaw had already come, and the Clan was beginning to stock up on prey again. She wanted to be serving her Clan, like all the other cats.

"Hey, who wants to check up on the warriors?" Icykit asked as he trotted out of the nursery, pelt neatly groomed and tail held high.

"I don't think the warriors need any 'checking up on,' Icykit," Bravekit mewed.

"That's not what I mean. I want to see what they're doing. Maybe it's more interesting than sitting around the nursery all day!" Icykit explained.

Meadowkit came up behind him. "Maybe we can go see what Feathermoon is doing. The warriors might be busy," She suggested.

Icykit groaned.

"But you're *always* with Feathermoon! She's probably doing nothing more than organizing herbs and mixing poultices, anyways," Icykit complained. Bravekit shivered. She would never want to be stuck in a cramped den mixing herbs all day. That would be so boring!

"Come on, I bet the warriors won't even notice us." Icykit insisted as he trotted off toward the warriors' den. Flowerkit and Bravekit followed, while Meadowkit hesitated before finally joining her den mates.

Icykit peeked through a clump of brambles on the side of the warriors' den. Bravekit stood next to him and shoved her nose through to get a look. She'd never seen inside the warriors' den, and curiosity was getting the best of her.

It was huge—much bigger than the nursery, that is. She could see two senior warriors, Rockclaw and Starlingstrike, talking quietly in the corner. Other than them, there were no other warriors in the den.

"Icefoot is getting old. He may retire and move to the elder's den soon," Bravekit heard Rockclaw say. "Plus, his bad foot isn't doing very well at the moment, either."

Blackstream had told Bravekit and Flowerkit a story about a time when Icefoot was an apprentice. It was leaf-bare and Icefoot, Starlingstrike, and Blackstream—who were all apprentices at the time—were hunting by the Smallpond, which had been covered in ice. Icefoot had apparently spotted a mouse and chased it onto the Smallpond. The ice had been too thin to support his weight and he fell in, twisting his ankle between two pieces of ice in the process. The other two apprentices rescued him, but his foot never did heal properly. He was named for the accident, and coincidentally, his name was already Icepaw to begin with.

"I wonder who Fogstar will choose to be the new deputy," Starlingstrike meowed. Rockclaw nodded, a distant look in his eye. Bravekit could imagine him thinking that he might become the next deputy.

"I have a feeling he may choose Sharpwhisker," Rockclaw mewed, proving Bravekit wrong. "She's been keeping a close eye on her lately."

Starlingstrike shook his head. "Sharpwhisker is too young to be deputy. She only received her warrior name three moons ago, and she hasn't finished Whitepaw's training yet," he reminded the other warrior.

Rockclaw nodded. "I guess you're right," he admitted. "We'll just have to wait and see who Fogstar chooses, then."

Bravekit had been so caught up in listening to the two warriors, she didn't even notice that Icykit wasn't next to her anymore. She turned around and saw him, Flowerkit, and Meadowkit making their way toward the elders' den.

"Hey, wait up!" She called as she bounded toward them.

"Sorry, you looked like you didn't want to be bothered *eavesdropping.*" Flowerkit mewed, her whiskers twitching with amusement.

"I just wanted to know who the next deputy would be," Bravekit defended.

"Still, you could have gotten in trouble if you were caught," her sister reminded her. Bravekit rolled her eyes. *What could they possibly do to a kit?*

The four kits entered the elders' den. Charredfur and Sleepyeye had returned back to their nests after sharing tongues for awhile, and they looked for too sleepy for having done nothing all day.

"Hello, young kits," Charredfur rasped. "Have you come looking for a story to hear?"

Icykit shook his head, and Bravekit breathed a silent sigh of relief. She wasn't in the mood for hearing stories at the moment.

"We just came to see how you were doing," Flowerkit piped in.

"Oh, how sweet of you youngsters. I can assure you that Charredfur and I are doing just fine, thank you for asking," Sleepyeye answered. "The four of you will make fine apprentices, and even better warriors, " she added.

Bravekit held her head high at the elder's praise. "Thank you, Sleepyeye," she mewed.

Meadowkit shuffled her paws. "I actually want to be a medicine cat," she said. Charredfur and Sleepyeye purred.

"Even better!" Sleepyeye said. "I'm sure Feathermoon would love the extra company." Meadowkit's ears perked up and she purred.

As the four kits were leaving, Charredfur called, "Have fun you kits! Don't cause the warriors too much trouble, now!"

"Don't worry, Charredfur," Meadowkit called back.

The four kits stood in the middle of the clearing, not knowing exactly what they should do next.

"Looks like we've got a stampede of kits prowling through the camp," Blueheart teased from her spot in front of the warriors' den.

"Yeah, Meadowkit and I just wanted to show Bravekit and Flowerkit around camp," Icykit said as he flashed a superior glance at Bravekit.

"We've already seen the camp!" She retorted. "Tigerfang showed us around before you ever did."

"Just stay out of trouble!" Rubyfoot called to the four kits.

"We will!" Icykit assured the two warriors.

Bravekit huffed. Why did everyone keep telling them to stay out of trouble? *I'm a good kit,* she thought.

Suddenly, Meadowkit dashed off toward the medicine den as Feathermoon emerged from the thick ferns that secluded the den from the rest of the camp. Bravekit sighed and reluctantly followed,

silently hoping she wouldn't smell like herbs for the rest of the day!

"Hi, Feathermoon!" Meadowkit mewed happily. Feathermoon purred as she looked down at the sandy colored kit.

"Hello, Meadowkit. What brings you here?" She asked.

"I wanted to see what you were doing. Is there anything I can help with?" Meadowkit asked as she looked up at Feathermoon's dark blue eyes.

"Oh, not at the moment. But you'll be apprenticed in only a half-moon. I should talk to Fogstar and ask her if you can train as my apprentice," Feathermoon meowed.

A purr rumbled in Meadowkit's throat. "I would love that!" She exclaimed.

Bravekit turned and began heading back toward the nursery. She didn't want to be reminded that she and her sister would be the only kits in the nursery, until Lilycloud's were born.

"Where are you going?" Flowerkit asked as she ran to catch up with her sister.

"I wish *we* were going to be apprenticed in a half-moon," Bravekit sighed, ignoring her sister's question.

Flowerkit seemed to forget about her question as she replied to Bravekit. "Don't worry, we'll be apprentices before you know it."

Chapter 2

Bravekit watched as Icypaw danced around the clearing, his tail twitching with excitement. He had been given his apprentice name nearly a moon ago, and there wasn't a sunrise since then that he hadn't bragged about it.

"Tonight's a full moon, Bravekit. You know what that means?" He asked. Bravekit sighed and nodded.

"Tonight there's going to be a Gathering!" He mewed anyway.

Bravekit had to admit, she was very jealous of Icypaw. She knew she should be happy for him, but she could only find herself wishing she were training to be an apprentice alongside him. By the time she would receive her apprentice name, Icypaw would be ready to accept his warrior name.

"Well, I hope you have fun," Bravekit mewed half heartedly, but Icypaw's excitement was too great and he didn't notice her lack of enthusiasm. He waved a goodbye to Bravekit with his tail before prancing toward his mentor, Blueheart.

Bravekit saw Feathermoon and Meadowpaw emerge from the medicine den. Fogstar had ended up agreeing to let Meadowpaw train as a medicine cat. The two medicine cats walked toward the thick bramble ferns that hid the entrance to the camp, called the bramble barrier.

Starlingstrike and Rockclaw were sitting a few tail-lengths away from the rest of the Clan. Feathermoon came up to join them without Meadowpaw at her side. She began quietly talking with them, and Bravekit strained her ears to hear what they were saying.

"I have to tell the other Clans that the kit from the prophecy has been born," Feathermoon meowed.

"That may not be a good idea. What if they get angry that the kit

wasn't part of their own Clan?" Rockclaw worried. *What kit?*

"They'll have to deal with it. The Clans deserve to know that the kit has been born. It's a major step in saving the entire forest," Feathermoon explained. She cast a sly glance at Bravekit, who turned her head in embarrassment of being caught eavesdropping.

"Are you sure that you haven't mistaken? What if she isn't really the right kit?" Starlingstrike questioned the medicine cat. Feathermoon gazed at Starlingstrike. Bravekit could almost smell the frustration pricking at her pelt.

"I know what I saw, Starlingstrike. StarClan couldn't have given me a clearer sign that this was the right one." Before the senior warrior could respond, Feathermoon whipped around and walked back toward Meadowpaw. She stole one last glance at Bravekit before murmuring something in Meadowpaw's ear, causing it to flick backwards.

Fogstar exited her den and walked toward the group of her Clanmates. Starlingstrike and Rockclaw ceased their talking and stood up to join the other cats. Fogstar lead the way through the brambles and Bravekit watched until the last tail disappeared into the forest.

She turned and made her way toward the nursery, her tail dragging through the short grass that made up the floor of the camp. She still had to wait nearly four moons to become an apprentice, and she might have to wait even longer for her first Gathering.

"Bravekit, pick your tail up," Blackstream meowed when her daughter entered the nursery. Bravekit sighed, but did as she was told.

"Come on, let's go play outside!" Flowerkit suggested. Bravekit shook her head.

"I'm not in the mood, Flowerkit," she warned her sister. Flowerkit's excitement faded away and she nodded glumly.

A reddish-brown she-cat padded into the nursery, Lilycloud. Bravekit looked at her swollen belly; her kits were due any day now. She couldn't decide whether that was a good thing or a bad thing. She'd have more company, but less room in the nursery.

Bravekit crawled into her mother's nest and snuggled deep into her belly. She didn't want to do anything besides sleep at the moment. She felt the weight of Flowerkit press against her flank as she cuddled next to Bravekit. A purr rose in her throat and she closed her eyes, drifting into a deep sleep.

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"Bravekit, wake up!" A small claw prodded Bravekit sharply in the shoulder.

"Ouch! What?" Bravekit mewed angrily as she sat up. She came face to face with her sister. Annoyance pricked at her pelt.

"Hush!" Blackstream hissed as she wrapped her body around her two kits.

Bravekit could hear an angry, determined voice outside in the clearing. Her anger faded into a mixture of curiosity and fear.

"Get out of our camp, Shiverstar," Fogstar's voice snarled. "Before I have to drive you out."

"Not until you hand over the kit," he replied. "Or I'll take it by force." His voice brought chills to Bravekit's body. It was dark and furious, and it had the perfect rasp to make it sound strong and menacing. Bravekit could only imagine what he must look like.

"I didn't think you would ever stoop as low as stealing kits, Shiverstar," Fogstar meowed, a grumble rising in her throat. *Who is he trying to steal?* Bravekit wondered. *Me?*

There was a moment of silence, and Bravekit heard light shuffling.

"MoonClan, attack!" the cat who Bravekit assumed to be Shiverstar, yowled. The clearing immediately bursted into horrible screeches and yowls, making Bravekit want to hide forever.

"Guard the nursery!" She heard Starlingstrike yowl. "Protect the kits!"

Bravekit huddled against her mother in fear as she heard fierce hisses and yowls of outrage right outside the nursery walls. Lilycloud hopped up and got ready to attack in case anyone got through, but her heavy belly was an obstacle for her to fight with.

A claw raked through the walls of the nursery, tearing bits and pieces of it off. Flowerkit squealed and buried herself deeper into Blackstream's belly. The mother wrapped her body tighter around her kits.

Another tearing sound and the front wall of the nursery crashed down. "Swiftheart, get that warrior!" Rockclaw shouted as he was pinned down by a huge tom with large black paws.

Swiftheart nimbly leapt onto the back of the gray warrior who was coming into the nursery. "Go back to where you came from, Troutfur!" he snarled as he landed a quick bite in his shoulder, but that didn't stop the gray tom. He rolled over in an attempt to crush Swiftheart, but the DawnClan tabby was too quick. He leapt off the MoonClan warrior and sliced at his belly while it was still exposed. He landed one last bite in his leg and sent him racing for the camp exit.

A swarm of cats had started fighting in front of the nursery, with all the DawnClan cats defending it, but MoonClan still wouldn't give up. They pressed closer and closer to the nursery until they were fighting only a tail-length away.

A white tom broke loose from the battle and dashed toward the nursery. He plowed Lilycloud out of the way, sanding her flying into the side wall of the nursery.

"No!" Blackstream cried. She stood up, shoving her two kits behind her, and faced the white tom. "Get out of here, Lightningblaze. You won't be taking my kits easily," she snarled.

Lightningblaze lunged at Blackstream, claws outstretched. They rolled onto the ground and Blackstream was able to sneak a few

nips at the bigger warrior's shoulders, but he was much stronger, and soon he had her pinned down with his paw on her neck.

"No!" Bravekit wailed as she leapt from her nest. She lunged at Lightningblaze and slashed her unsheathed claws down his face. "Leave my mother alone!" She yowled.

"Bravekit, look out!" Flowerkit squeaked from her nest. Before Bravekit could move she was scooped up and being carried by the extra skin on her neck.

"Help!" Bravekit pleaded as she squirmed in the warrior's jaws. Massive black paws, the same ones who attacked Rockclaw, were moving quickly below her. They were almost at the exit.

"Put her down, you foxheart!" a familiar voice commanded. *Icypaw!*

She was dropped to the ground as he barreled into the warrior who was carrying her. Bravekit saw a flash of white as Icypaw nipped at his legs, and then pounced on the huge gray tom's back.

"MoonClan, fall back! Fall back!" Shiverstar announced. Bravekit finally saw what the MoonClan leader looked like, and it was not what she expected. He was a small warrior with ginger and white patches on his pelt. He had frail looking bones, but long fur to hide it. His dark voice did not match up with his appearance at all.

"Yeah, you better run!" Sharpwhisker snarled at the brown MoonClan warrior she sent running.

"Blackstream!" Bravekit mewed with relief when she saw her mother limp out of the nursery with Flowerkit at her side. She rushed over to her mother and pressed her cheek up against hers.

Fogstar leapt up onto the Highmound, where she always addressed the Clan.

"Cats of DawnClan," she began. "Shiverstar was attacking our camp because he wanted Bravekit."

Me? But why? Bravekit thought to herself.

"Who knows what he will try and do next? All the Clans now know that we have the kit destined to fulfill a prophecy in our paws. We have to prove to them that we are strong enough to take care of this kit," Fogstar mewed. Murmurs of agreement floated through the air.

"What's going on?" Bravekit asked her mother.

"Go see Feathermoon when she is done taking care of the wounded," Blackstream told her. "She'll explain everything."

"Don't you need to see her, too?" Bravekit asked, eyeing the scratch on her mother's chest.

"I'll manage," she replied.

Bravekit nodded and walked over to Feathermoon. She had been treating cats during Fogstar's speech, and she was nearly finished.

"Hey there, Bravekit," she mewed softly when she saw Bravekit approaching. "Need me to look at anything?" Bravekit shook her head.

"No, actually I was wondering if you could explain to me what's going on? Why did Shiverstar want to take me?" Bravekit asked. Feathermoon sighed and began walking towards her den.

"Look, Bravekit. I didn't want to have to tell you this until you were old enough to understand it," she sighed. "But... Well, you're part of a prophecy."

"A prophecy?" Bravekit echoed.

"Yes. It's a prophecy saying that the forest will fall apart and be ripped to shreds, and only you can prevent that," Feathermoon explained.

"How?"

Feathermoon shook her head. "I don't know," she admitted. "But it will all fall into place. As long as we keep you safe."

"What was the prophecy?" Bravekit questioned.

Feathermoon took a deep breath. "Courage will prove itself at the claws of its own Clanmate, warrior will turn against leader, and the forest will be ripped apart."

Bravekit stood quietly, trying to process the medicine cat's words. "That's... horrible," she whispered.

"But you can stop it. You can save us," Feathermoon me owed encouragingly. Bravekit nodded, but she was too exhausted to think about anything at the moment. She began to exit the medicine cat's den when Feathermoon spoke up one last time.

"I believe in you Bravekit. Now you must believe in yourself."

Chapter 3

"Bravepaw! Flowerpaw! Bravepaw! Flowerpaw!"

Bravepaw felt a rush of pride as her clanmates cheered her new name. Flowerpaw was right. They had become apprentices in what felt like no time at all. It seemed that just yesterday they hadn't even opened their eyes yet, and here they were being given their apprentice names!

Bravepaw walked over to her mentor, Starlingstrike, as he gazed down at her with pride. "Tell me when you're ready to go tour the borders. You'll need to know every part of our territory," he meowed. "But first, you should go talk with your Clanmates." Bravepaw nodded and rushed off toward Blackstream.

"I'm an apprentice!" she squealed. Blackstream purred with delight.

"I'm so proud of you," she murmured as she rubbed her cheek against Bravepaw's shoulder.

Flowerpaw bounded towards Bravepaw and Blackstream. "Finally, we're apprentices!" she exclaimed.

Blackstream gazed at her two daughters with pride. "Both of you will make excellent warriors," she purred. She gave them both a lick across the ear and the two apprentices were met by Icypaw and Meadowpaw, who were made apprentices nearly five moons ago.

"You're finally apprentices!" Icypaw mewed happily. "I can't wait to train together. I'll teach you some of the best battle moves I know!" he promised. Bravepaw purred with amusement.

Meadowpaw purred along with Bravepaw. "Congratulations," she meowed. Bravepaw could smell the aroma of herbs drifting from her pelt.

"Thank you," Bravepaw mewed. Feathermoon called Meadowpaw

back over, and Icypaw dashed off towards his mentor, Blueheart. Lilycloud's kits, who were now two moons old, came bouncing towards Bravepaw and Flowerpaw.

"Congratulations!" Mewed Brownkit, the only she-cat out of the three kits. Firekit clambered over her.

"Yeah, congratulations!" He exclaimed. "Maybe you can teach us some battle moves when you aren't busy," He suggested, excitement filling his voice.

"We'll see," Bravepaw purred. She looked over at Applekit to see him sitting patiently, waiting for a chance to speak up. He was the most polite kit Bravepaw had ever met. His littermates ran back over to their mother.

"Congratulations," Applekit mewed quietly. Bravepaw purred and rested her tail against his shoulder.

"Thank you," she mewed in reply. He gave a small purr.

"You got our father as your mentor," he pointed out. "You're lucky."

"He's a great warrior," Bravepaw told the young kit. "I bet one day you'll be just like him." Applekit's eyes lit up. He dipped his head to Bravepaw before running off to join his littermates.

Bravepaw watched him go, purring, before she turned and walked back towards Starlingstrike. He was talking with Rubyfoot, Flowerpaw's mentor. Flowerpaw followed behind her.

"I can't wait to start training," she mewed excitedly.

The two sisters joined their mentors. Bravepaw was so excited she could barely keep still. Her paws itched to do something and she sheathed and unsheathed her claws into the ground multiple times.

"Alright, we're just waiting for Fallenrain to join us and then we'll be on our way," Starlingstrike meowed. Fallenpaw and Spotpaw had received their warrior names, Fallenrain and Spotface, about three moons ago after the MoonClan ambush. Bravepaw still remembered the prophecy she had learned of on that night, and she always

thought about it before she went to sleep.

"Here he is," Rubyfoot meowed as Fallenrain approached the waiting patrol.

"Sorry," he mewed. "Spotface and I got caught up in a conversation." Starlingstrike nodded understandingly and the patrol set off.

The cats exited camp through the main exit, the bramble barrier, which was a thick wall of bramble ferns. Once outside the camp walls, Bravepaw gasped. She hadn't expected the forest to be so big!

"Let's head to the Smallpond first," Starlingstrike suggested. The five cats trekked through the forest. It didn't take them long to reach the Smallpond, as it was not far from the camp entrance.

"This is the Clan's main source of water. It is also plentiful when it comes to prey, so warriors often like to hunt here," Rubyfoot explained. Bravepaw nodded as she surveyed the area. Fallenrain had gone off to replenish some of the scent markers on the border as Rubyfoot talked.

Movement caught Bravestorm's attention in the side of her vision, and she turned and saw a squirrel nibbling on a nut at the base of a tree.

However, Bravepaw wasn't the only one to spot the squirrel. Flowerpaw saw it too, and she dashed for it. Before she could reach it, it scrambled up the tree to safety.

"Mouse dung!" She exclaimed.

"Let's save hunting for another day," Starlingstrike mewed, his voice steady, but Bravepaw saw his whiskers twitching with amusement, just barely.

The patrol left the Smallpond and headed around the camp towards the mountains. They stopped at a spot where the forest trees ended, revealing a rocky trail covered with gravel that sloped upwards, leading up into the mountains.

"This is the Mountain Path. We use this trail to travel to the Star

Cave and to the Moon Spring," Starlingstrike informed. Bravepaw had heard of the Moon Spring before; Gatherings were held there. Icypaw had talked about it nonstop on the day of his first Gathering. By now, he had been to at least four.

"What's the Star Cave?" Bravepaw asked, not having heard of that before.

"The Star Cave is where medicine cats go to share tongues with StarClan. Leaders also travel there to receive their nine lives. You'll visit there before you earn your warrior name," Fallenrain spoke up before either of the two mentors could answer. "Sorry," he quickly mewed to the mentors when he realized he'd interrupted them.

"No, it's good. This will help you prepare for your own apprentice one day," Starlingstrike assured him. Fallenrain nodded, letting out a breath of relief, and the Clan cats proceeded on their tour of the territory.

"This stretch of trees we call the Highoaks. These are ancient oak trees the reach high up into StarClan. You can tell how old they are just by comparing their soft bark to the rougher bark on the trees further towards the Smallpond," Starlingstrike explained, touching the tip of his tail to one of the trees next to him. Bravepaw did the same, feeling the smoother texture.

"Is there any good prey to hunt here?" Flowerpaw asked. Bravepaw could tell her sister was into hunting more than anything.

"Oh, plenty. Squirrels, mice, voles, shrews, and many types of birds live in this part of the forest. There's a whole variety!" Rubyfoot answered. Flowerpaw licked her lips, as if she were tasting the juicy flesh of a mouse at the very moment.

"Come on, let's keep moving!" she urged excitedly. She bounced forward on her paws. Rubyfoot began to lead the way.

Bravepaw could see odd colored triangles in the distance, and she squinted her eyes to see them better through the leaves.

"This is what we call the twoleg settlement. Twolegs camp their

strange dens here and usually hunt our prey on this side, so we try to hunt here as little as possible," Rubyfoot meowed, casting a glare at one of the twoleg kits as it pulled back a piece of fabric and crawled into one of the dens. "They've been here for as long as we can remember," she added.

"Even during leaf-bare?" Flowerpaw asked.

"Yes. It's their camp," Fallenrain mewed. "Just like we have our camp."

"Can't we drive them out? I mean, they *are* on our territory." Bravepaw pointed out, her tail lashing from side to side.

"We'd be no match for them. I've seen what they can do to prey. They have a strange structure composed of a single tooth that's attached to a stick, and they launch it at their prey with a weird, half-circular drvice that they carry in their paws or on their backs. It kills prey in an instant, piercing right through their body," Starlingstrike explained. Bravepaw tried to imagine such a thing, but she found it hard.

A flash of movement caught Bravepaw's eye. Two green eyes glinted from a bush not far from the twoleg settlement area. It stared at the patrol for a few moments, and then vanished into the thick of the bushes. A twoleg stepped up onto a rock about four fox-lengths away from where the pair of eyes sat.

"Well, let's get out of here before they decide *we're* their next meal," Bravepaw mewed, seeing the twoleg eye the five cats curiously.

The patrol raced away and came to a stop at a giant oak tree, much thicker, taller, and wider than the ones in Highoaks. The biggest difference was that there was only one like it, while all the others around it looked normal.

"This is almost our last stop, and it's called the Tall Oak. It, like the trees in Highoaks, is very old. Apprentices will learn to climb trees here, as its branches are close together and its bark is the perfect texture for gripping onto," Starlingstrike explained. Bravepaw nodded, tilting her head up to see the great tree.

"Many herbs and plants can be found here, too, but that's for Meadowpaw to learn about," Fallenrain mewed. Bravepaw was glad she didn't have to listen to a boring lesson about leaves that all looked the same in her mind.

"Alright, we're almost done," Rubyfoot assureed the now-exhausted apprentices. Bravepaw breathed a silent mew of relief. Her paws were beginning to ache, and she was becoming very tired.

The five cats entered an area near the Tall Oak that was guarded by walls of bramble ferns. It had a large clearing with soft, damp dirt covering the ground. There was a thin roof patched above the cats, but small patches in certain spots let sunlight in

"This is the training hollow. You will spend much of your time here practicing battle skills and anything else you may need to learn," Rubyfoot mewed.

Bravepaw took a few steps into the training hollow. The soft, moist dirt soothed her aching paws. She let them sink into the ground, the feeling of the dirt surrounding them very relaxing.

"How do you keep the ground perfectly damp like this?" Bravepaw asked, pawing at the dirt. Starlingstrike purred.

"Good question, Bravepaw. You see all these holes in the roof?" he asked. Bravepaw looked up and nodded. "Well, they allow just enough moisture to enter the hollow, but once in, it doesn't leave the hollow, keeping the dirt damp and soft. It's only sometimes harder during very hot greenleaf sunrises," he explained. Bravepaw nodded. She heard Fallenrain emit a small purr beside her.

"I had a lot of good times in this place," he mewed. "Trust me, you'll like it here," he assured the two apprentices as he exited the hollow. The rest of the patrol followed him and headed back to the camp.

At that point, Bravepaw wanted nothing more than to lay down in her new nest in the apprentice's den and fall asleep. However, she decided it would be a good idea to eat first. Plus, Blackstream would want to ask her about her first day as an apprentice, though there's not much to tell about seeing the borders.

Bravepaw padded towards the fresh-kill mound, seeing as it was overflowing with prey. *A hunting party must have just gotten back,* she thought to herself.

Bravepaw picked a plump mouse from the fresh-kill mound and carried it towards the apprentice's den to eat it. She settled herself outside her new den next to Flowerpaw and dug in.

"I can't wait until tomorrow. Rubyfoot said she would take me hunting. Starlingstrike said he was going to bring you along, too," Flowerpaw mewed through a mouthful of shrew. Normally, the thought of hunting for the first time made Bravepaw's heart flutter with excitement, but she was so exhausted that she didn't want to do anything but sleep at the moment.

"Did you have fun?" Bravepaw recognized Icypaw's voice coming from behind her. She swallowed her last bite of mouse before turning around to see him padding towards her.

"It was great, but I'm really tired," Bravepaw replied. Icypaw nodded.

"That's exactly how I felt after my first day as an apprentice," he said. "Trust me, it's normal."

"My pads are sore. Is that normal?" Flowerpaw asked. Icypaw nodded, a small bit of laughter escaping his mouth.

"Flowerpaw, Bravepaw!" Blackstream called as she sprinted towards her daughters. "How was your first day?" She asked. Bravepaw turned to Icypaw and held up a paw, as if to say, *one moment please.*

"It was awesome!" Flowerpaw purred. Blackstream purred along with her.

"I'm glad you had fun," she mewed. "What are you doing tomorrow? Do you know yet?"

"Hunting. Probably near the Smallpond, or maybe Highoaks," Flowerpaw answered. Blackstream nodded.

"Well, you be careful. Don't fall into the water or anything," she

warned them. Bravepaw rolled her eyes.

"Don't worry about us, Blackstream. Starlingstrike and Rubyfoot will keep an eye on us," Bravepaw assured her mother. Blackstream nodded and gave her two kits a lick on their ears, and then she padded back towards the warrior's den. Now that her kits were apprentices, she was free to move back into the warrior's den with the rest of the warriors.

Bravepaw padded over to Icypaw, who had waited patiently through the conversation between kits and mother.

"Sorry about that," she murmured.

"No worries. Littleshell was the same way when Meadowkit and I first became apprentices," he meowed. Bravepaw felt her whiskers twitch with amusement. *Mothers,* she thought with a silent laugh.

"So, what did you do today?" Bravepaw asked her friend.

Icypaw shrugged. "The usual. A little bit of hunting, then some battle moves, and then I cleared out the elder's den." Bravepaw nodded.

"I have a question," she told him. "Have you ever seen any cats near the twoleg settlement?"

Icypaw nodded. "There are a few kittypets that live there, but nothing more important than that," he answered.

"Okay... It's just that, I think I saw one. It was watching our patrol, almost curiously," Bravepaw mewed. Icypaw sighed.

"I think I may know who you might be talking about," he meowed. "Littleshell told me about a warrior who gave up her warrior life to be a kittypet. At least, that's what we think she decided to be. Her name was Fangheart. She left the Clan when Littleshell was only an apprentice."

Bravepaw was shocked. "What did we tell the other Clans?"

"Fogstar lied and said that Fangheart was killed by a badger. She

didn't want the other Clans to think her Clan was full of softhearted kittypets, especially with all the ridiculing she'd get from MoonClan," Icypaw replied. Bravepaw was baffled. Why would *any* cat wish to give up the precious life of being a warrior?

"Bravepaw!" Starlingstrike called. Bravepaw turned, hearing her name.

"Go ahead," Icypaw whispered. Bravepaw nodded and waved a goodbye him with her tail and then padded towards her mentor.

"Would you like to try hunting tomorrow?" He asked her when she was about a tail-length away.

"Absolutely!" Bravepaw exclaimed, almost dancing on her paws. Starlingstrike purred.

"Alright, we're going to go with Flowerpaw and Rubyfoot tomorrow. I might let Icypaw tag along as well," he said. Bravepaw nodded excitedly. She liked hearing the news that Icypaw might come. He was good company—when he wasn't boasting, that is.

"Now, go get some rest. You'll need some energy tomorrow," her mentor told her. Bravepaw dipped her head and padded towards the apprentice's den.

She climbed into a pre-made nest for her. Icypaw and Whitepaw had been kind enough to prepare nests for the new apprentices. Bravepaw could smell the faint scent of Icypaw on the moss. He must have made her nest.

Bravepaw drifted to sleep with the sweet smell of Icypaw in her nose and the excitement of what would come tomorrow in her paws.

Chapter 4

"You'll have to be quicker than that if you want to catch a squirrel." Icypaw meowed to Bravepaw. She sat back as she watched the squirrel scurry up a tree, its tail moving almost tauntingly as it waved back and forth.

Flowerpaw sighed. "We haven't caught *anything* yet and we've been out here since sunrise!" She complained.

"Your doing everything right. Squirrels are just tricky for first-time apprentices." Rubyfoot meowed.

"Maybe we should try the Smallpond." Icypaw suggested. Starlingstrike nodded.

"Good idea, Icypaw." He mewed in praise of the apprentice. They crossed the forest and made their way towards the Smallpond.

Icypaw fell in step next to Bravepaw. "Are you planning on going to the Gathering two sunrises from now?" He asked. *The Gathering!*

"It depends if Starlingstrike says it's okay." Bravepaw answered. Starlingstrike pricked his ears at the mention of his name.

"Says what's okay?" He asked.

"Oh, I was just wondering if we could go to the Gathering in two sunrises?" Bravepaw mewed. Starlingstrike sighed.

"Do you really think that's such a good idea? Have you forgotten what MoonClan tried to do to you?" He asked.

Bravepaw shook her head and let her tail drag across the ground in disappointment. "No, Starlingstrike, I haven't forgotten." She answered.

"Then it's probably best if you wait until you learn a few battle moves, just in case you need to defend yourself." Her mentor

explained. Bravepaw nodded glumly. She was really hoping to meet the cats from the other Clans... Besides MoonClan.

"I can keep an eye on her and make sure no MoonClan cats come near her." Icypaw spoke up. Starlingstrike looked at the older apprentice.

"I'll think about it." He meowed. "We still have two sunrises until the day comes." He reminded them. Bravepaw nodded, hope pricking at her pelt.

The hunting patrol arrived at the Smallpond, ready to finally catch something.

"Are there fish in the Smallpond?" Flowerpaw asked.

Rubyfoot nodded. "Of course there are, but we aren't DuskClan. We don't eat fish, so we just leave them alone." She answered. Flowerpaw tried to get a look in the pond at the silver fish swimming swiftly through the water. Bravepaw secretly wondered what they tasted like.

Bravepaw tasted the air. There was a stale scent of vole, a stronger scent of mouse, and a very recent scent of... Fox?

"I... I think I smell fox." Bravepaw mewed worriedly.

Starlingstrike sniffed the air. "We should get out of here." He mewed as he quickly began to lead the hunting patrol away.

Bravepaw began to follow, but then she saw the mouse. It was only a few fox-lengths away. *I have to catch it.* She thought to herself. She began to stalk towards it, keeping her body low to the ground.

Wait for it , wait for it ... Now !

Bravepaw leaped at the mouse, pouncing on it and killing it with a quick bite to the neck.

"Bravepaw!" Icypaw meowed. She expected it to be in surprise, but alarm coated his mew like a fresh layer of snow.

A low growl sounded behind Bravepaw and she sat up with the mouse dangling from her mouth. She was face to face with a fox.

Fear lurched in her heart and Bravepaw immediately turned and ran. She heard quick paw steps behind her and knew the fox was pursuing her. *StarClan help me!*

With the mouse still in her jaws, Bravepaw veered around a tree and then climbed up it in hopes to escape the fox. To her dismay, it began to ascend the tree behind her. Bravepaw leaped down, hurting her right hind leg in the process, but still sprinted away. She kept running until she couldn't hear or smell the fox anymore.

Bravepaw collapsed on the ground, heart hammering and flanks heaving for air. But, after all, the mouse was still in her jaws.

"Bravepaw!" Her sister's voice filled the air. Bravepaw lifted her head to see her sister bounding towards her. "Are you alright?" She asked. Bravepaw, too exhausted to speak, only nodded.

Icypaw, Rubyfoot, and Starlingstrike joined the two apprentices quickly.

"That was incredible!" Icypaw exclaimed.

"It was also dangerous." Starlingstrike meowed. "You're lucky that fox didn't catch you."

"That was a brave thing to do." Rubyfoot mewed in praise. "But, also very risky. I wouldn't go trying that again anytime soon." She warned. Bravepaw nodded. Flowerpaw helped her sister stand and the the patrol began walking back towards camp.

"My leg," Bravepaw managed to mew. "It hurts."

Starlingstrike turned and looked at her leg, which was causing her to limp.

"You'll have to see Feathermoon about that." He meowed. Bravepaw nodded and they proceeded walking.

"I can take that for you." Icypaw offered, gesturing towards the

mouse Bravepaw was carrying. "I'll tell the Clan you caught it." He added. Bravepaw nodded and passed him the mouse, mewing a quiet thank you.

When they arrived at the camp, Bravepaw went straight towards the medicine den. She could hear Icypaw boasting about her catch behind her, telling the whole Clan how she outran the fox.

When she stepped inside, the strong scent of herbs invaded her nose. She saw Feathermoon and Meadowpaw sorting herbs in a small hollow in the side of the wall, where the herbs were stored. Feathermoon looked up when she heard Bravepaw come in.

"Hey there, what can I do for you?" She asked. Then she noticed Bravepaw limping. "Oh dear, what happened?"

"I hurt my leg jumping from a tree." Bravepaw mewed, suddenly realizing how stupid it sounded. Feathermoon purred with amusement.

"Of course you did." She mewed jokingly. "Here, let me take a look at it."

Feathermoon inspected her leg and then went to go get some herbs. When she came back, there was a serious look on her face.

"Is it bad?" Bravepaw asked.

"No, no. Just a minor sprain. You'll only need to rest for a few sunrises." She answered. Relief flooded Bravepaw.

Feathermoon's voice suddenly became much softer and more tense. "Have you been thinking about the prophecy?" She asked. Bravepaw nodded.

"Good." She meowed. She began to rip apart a few leaves. "I had a dream last night. It was about you." The medicine cat mewed. Bravepaw looked up at her.

"What... What happened?" She asked, almost scared for the answer. The ferns at the entrance to the medicine den shivered and a golden head popped through.

"I'll tell you later." Feathermoon whispered in her ear.

Starlingstrike came into the den. "How is she?" He asked Feathermoon.

"Don't worry, she's alright." Feathermoon assured him. "She'll just have to rest up for a few sunrises."

Starlingstrike nodded. "Icypaw is worried about you." He mewed to his apprentice. "I'll tell him you're okay." He promised her.

Bravepaw dipped her head to her mentor. "Thank you." She mewed. He nodded and padded out of the medicine den. Feathermoon handed Bravepaw a handful of leaves.

"Eat these dandelion leaves." She told her. "They'll ease the pain while I apply the poultice." Bravepaw nods and chews them. They tasted bitter, yet sweet. Bravepaw forces them down and watches as Feathermoon gathered a poultice to apply on her leg.

"It may hurt a bit from the muscle being provoked." She warned. Bravepaw nodded and held back a hiss as Feathermoon applied the poultice. She felt as if her muscles were being stretched tail-lengths!

When Feathermoon was finished, she told Bravepaw to get some rest. Bravepaw glady did so, falling asleep to the smell of herbs and a bitter-sweet taste in her mouth.

*****

"Hey, Bravepaw, wake up." A soft voice whispered in Bravepaw's ear. She opened her eyes and lifted her head to see a white, blurry figure. Icypaw.

"Hi," she mewed groggily. Icypaw chuckled.

"How are you feeling?" He asked. Bravepaw shrugged. Her leg felt stiff and she didn't want to even try moving it.

"I'm okay." She meowed. Icypaw nodded.

"Fogstar just called a meeting. Feathermoon said you could watch

from outside the medicine den. It isn't that far a walk." He mewed. Bravepaw sat up and slowly climbed out of her nest. She held back a gasp as a sharp pain went through her leg. Icypaw helped her outside and they sat together at the entrance to the medicine den.

"Icefoot, you have served your Clan well for many seasons. Is it your wish to join the elders?"

"It is." The white tom mewed.

"Thank you for all your service to the Clan. I call upon StarClan to give you many seasons of rest." Fogstar mewed, resting her tail on Icefoot's shoulder.

"Icefoot! Icefoot!" The Clan cheered his name. Bravepaw and Icypaw joined in. Icypaw chanted his father's name with love and pride

The Clan's cheers died down and Fogstar padded to the front of the Highmound as Icefoot leaped down from it.

"The time has come to choose a new deputy for the Clan. I have thought long and hard about this decision." Fogstar meows. "I say these words before StarClan so that they may hear and approve of my choice. The new deputy of DawnClan will be Starlingstrike."

Starlingstrike rose and made his way up onto the Highmound.

"May StarClan grant you the bravery and leadership to help the Clan face the troubles that lie in the future." Fogstar mewed. She touched her tail-tip to his shoulders. Starlingstrike dipped his head solemnly after giving his leader a respectful lick on the shoulder.

"Starlingstrike! Starlingstrike!" The Clan chants his name. Bravepaw joined in, her voice rising above all the others in pride for her mentor.

Maybe that will be me someday. Bravepaw thought. *Maybe I'll become deputy. Maybe even leader.*

Chapter 5

Bravepaw stared blankly at the space ahead of her. Feathermoon's words echoed in her head. *You can't go to the Gathering.* She had said. *Your leg still needs to heal.*

Bravepaw didn't see why she couldn't attend the Gathering. Her leg was feeling much better after two sunrises of rest. Now she would have to watch as all of her friends went to the Gathering while she stayed back at camp- again.

Bravepaw sighed and decided to take a walk to keep her mind off things. She got up from her nest in Feathermoon's den and walked out into the clearing.

Her first instinct was to go find Starlingstrike, but then she remembered he had to go to the Gathering. He was the new deputy, after all.

Bravepaw sighed and left the camp. Everyone was in their dens, and Bravepaw felt lonely. Even Flowerpaw hadn't been talking to her as much as she used to. Icypaw and Starlingstrike were the only cats, besides Feathermoon, who ever spoke to Bravepaw anymore. Blackstream came in to see her once.

Bravepaw wandered over to the Tall Oak, but she wasn't interested in smelling the herbs that grew around it. She'd had enough herb scent from the past few sunrises. She proceeded to walk until she could see bright colors peeking through the green leaves of the forest.

Bravepaw walked up and stared at the twoleg settlement, wondering if Fangheart was there. Bravepaw was about to proceed walking until a noise made her stop.

Crack !

A twig snapped. Someone was near! Bravepaw instinctively

dropped low to the ground and slinked into the bushes behind her. Suddenly, the shrubbery only a fox-length away from her shivered, and a she-cat's head popped into the open. She stepped out, her white body glowing against the green forest around her.

Bravepaw had never seen this cat before. She didn't smell like she was a Clan cat. *A kittypet!* Bravepaw realized. *Get off our territory!* She thought.

Bravepaw jumped out at the kittypet, claws unsheathed and ready to drive her out. The she-cat leapt backwards in horror, her eyes widening to the size of saucers.

"Please don't hurt me!" She pleaded as she cowered below Bravepaw. Bravepaw almost laughed out loud. She was only about half the kittypet's size, and she was still scared of her.

"I'm surprised you didn't go running." Bravepaw mewed as she relaxed herself, forcing her fur to lie flat. She wasn't going to actually harm the innocent kittypet.

"You- you're not going to kill me?" The she-cat asked as she slowly straightened herself up. Bravepaw shook her head.

"Of course not, what good would that do me? You're just a kittypet." She pointed out. "Besides, it's against the warrior code to kill a cat for no reason." She added. The kittypet looked at Bravepaw as if she were suddenly a flying hedgehog.

"Warrior code? Gee, you must be one of those crazy forest cats." She muttered, half to herself.

"That's what you think." Bravepaw mewed. "You should hear what we say about *your* lifestyle back at camp." Bravepaw told the kittypet.

"I'd rather not." She mewed. "Anyways, I better get going. My owners will be worried. They might think I got eaten... Never mind." She meowed as she quickly tried to pad away. Bravepaw caught her tail just in time.

"Wait!" She called. Her claw accidentally hooked the end of the

kittypet's tail and drew blood.

"Ow!" She cried. Bravepaw flinched.

"I'm sorry. It was an accident." She mewed apologetically. The kittypet gathered her tail and began to lick it, cleansing the wound thoroughly before replying to Bravepaw.

"Whatever. You wild cats don't have any manners anyways." She snarled. Bravepaw wanted to rake her claws down her face at the moment, but she resisted the urge.

"Look, I need to ask you something." She told her. She waited, and when she was sure the kittypet wouldn't run off, she continued to speak.

"There's a cat who used to be in our Clan, named Fangheart. She left our Clan a long time ago. Do you happen to know her?" She asked.

The white cat shook her head. "No. I try as little as I can to socialize with you strange cats." She snapped.

Bravepaw sighed. "Alright then. Can I at least get your name?"

The kittypet looked at the apprentice for a moment.

"My name is Sugar. Can I go now?" She asked, her tail lashing restlessly back and forth. Bravepaw reluctantly nodded and watched as the kittypet bolted away.

She wanted to know more about Fangheart. Maybe there was a nicer kittypet around, one with less of a temper. Bravepaw would rather question them about the old DawnClan warrior.

Bravepaw decided to take the long way and walk all the way around camp to get back. She knew the Gathering was over by now, but she didn't want to see Icypaw or Flowerpaw just yet.

After a long walk, Bravepaw finally returned to camp. She padded through the entrance, only to freeze when she saw cats running around frantically. Were they looking for something? Did they lose Firekit? Bravepaw knew he could be a handful sometimes.

"Thank StarClan, you're safe!" Blackstream's relieved mew sounded as she rushed towards Bravepaw, grooming her and wrapping her tail around her daughter's body. The DawnClan cats all stopped searching when they saw Bravepaw.

"What happened to you?" Bravepaw asked as she tried to duck away from her mother's tongue.

"Bravepaw!" Starlingstrike's stern mew echoed across the clearing. He stomped towards his apprentice and stood over her.

"Where were you?" He growled. Bravepaw shrunk back toward the ground.

"I- I just went for a walk." She stammered. Starlingstrike sighed and got out of Bravepaw's face.

"You can't leave camp without telling anyone. We thought MoonClan stole you, or worse." He explained. Bravepaw nodded.

"I'm sorry, Starlingstrike. It won't happen again." She assured him.

"Do you promise?" He asked.

"I promise."

Chapter 6

Bravepaw picked at a loose string of moss on her nest. Feathermoon came into the medicine den, her face softening when she saw Bravepaw's glum look.

"Don't be upset." The medicine cat told her. She padded towards the apprentice and rested her tail on her shoulder.

"What's not to be upset about? Starlingstrike is mad at me, and I made the Clan worry." Bravepaw mewed, her voice betraying the fact that she felt like disappearing.

Feathermoon sighed. "Starlingstrike's not mad at you, and the Clan is just happy that you're safe." She assured the gloomy apprentice. "Don't worry, everything is okay now."

Bravepaw sighed, but didn't say anything else. She knew she must be stressing the Clan out, since she was part of such a huge prophecy.

"I need to talk to you." Feathermoon meowed, her voice becoming more serious. "I never did get a chance to tell you about that dream I had."

Bravepaw sat up and perked her ears. Curiosity made her fur quiver. "Tell me." She mewed.

"Alright," Feathermoon began. "In the dream I saw you standing in the heat of a thick battle. You were battling a ginger she-cat from MoonClan. I saw a large gray tom rear up behind you." Feathermoon paused, her eyes flooding with grief. "He slashed at you with huge claws and brought you to the ground." She continued "You tried to put up a fight but... But he was too strong. I woke up before I could see the end, but the last thing I saw was you laying on the ground with your own blood staining your pelt."

Bravepaw sat in horror, unable to speak. Feathermoon had pretty

much just prophesized Bravepaw's death to her.

"I have already seen a part of this dream somewhere else." The medicine cat continued. "I saw the same vision of blood staining your pelt when you were born."

"I..." Bravepaw's throat tightened and she couldn't say anything else.

"I'm sorry, Bravepaw." The medicine cat whispered. "No cat should have to go through what you will have to endure."

Terror made Bravepaw's pelt bristle. Never in her life had she been so scared.

"Why me?" Bravepaw asked suddenly. She didn't mean to say it, it just slipped out.

"I don't know." Feathermoon admitted, shaking her head.

"I wish I was just a normal cat with no prophecies to follow or destinies to fulfill." Bravepaw hissed, her fear suddenly turning to anger. She resented StarClan for putting her in this position.

Feathermoon sighed and shook her head. "Every cat has a destiny, Bravepaw. Some are just greater than others."

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"Will you please play with us?" Brownkit whined. "Please?" She begged. Firekit crawled over her, knocking her to the ground— He had a habit of doing that.

"Yea, why haven't you been playing with us lately?" He asked. Bravepaw sighed and hooked a blade of grass with her claw absentmindedly.

It had been a half-moon since Feathermoon told Bravepaw of her dream. It had haunted the apprentice since. Training had become difficult, as she could no longer focus.

"Fine. What do you want to play?" Bravepaw asked halfheartedly. She still remembered all of her favorite games from when she was a

kit.

"I'm a MoonClan cat, you have to fight me!" Firekit roared, as much as a kit can roar.

Bravepaw suddenly remembered Feathermoon's dream. She was battling a ginger cat from MoonClan. Firekit had a ginger coat. Bravepaw shook her head and tried not to get distracted.

"Alright." Bravepaw mewed uncertainly. Firekit leaped at her, his tiny claws trying to dig into Bravepaw's thick white-and-gray pelt. Bravepaw tumbled to the ground with him. Brownkit leaped onto Bravepaw's stomach, while Applekit pawed at her face.

"Come on you kits, leave poor Bravepaw alone." Lilycloud's voice came from the entrance to the nursery.

"Aww!" Firekit whined as he climbed off of Bravepaw. '*Poor Bravepaw',* the apprentice thought silently. *Even the Clan has pity for me.*

Feathermoon hadn't told the Clan about the dream, only that she had foreseen something terrible of Bravepaw. Now the whole Clan was acting pitiful towards Bravepaw, and she hated it.

The three kits said goodbye to Bravepaw and scampered off. *I wish I was like them,* Bravepaw thought. *Careless and worry-free.*

Bravepaw sat in that same spot in front of the apprentice's den for a while. She couldn't bring herself to stand up and do anything, though she knew she should be tending to the elders.

She was finally about to get up when Icypaw burst into the clearing, running at full speed. He skidded to a stop before be ran into the fresh-kill mound.

"Icypaw, what's going on?" Starlingstrike asked as he padded towards the apprentice.

"I saw a SunClan patrol descending the Mountain Path into our territory. I couldn't tell if they were a battle patrol or not." The white tom panted. Just past the Mountain Path was the border

between SunClan territory and DawnClan territory. There was a separate trail that DawnClan used to travel safely to the Moon Spring and Star Cave.

"How many cats were there?" Starlingstrike asked.

"Four. Dayheart, Sparrowflight, Littleleap, and Shadepaw. They didn't look as if they were going to attack, they just strolled into our territory like it was their own." Icypaw informed. The pelts of the cats around Bravepaw began to bristle.

"They better not try and hunt here!" Dustflight snarled. "We hardly have enough prey for ourselves!"

Dustflight was right. In the past moon, the prey had started to dwindle. Despite it being Greenleaf, prey had become sightly scarce. Leaf-fall would come in only moon.

"We'll send a strong patrol out to greet them and bring them back to camp." Starlingstrike decided.

"I'll go." Bravepaw offered unexpectedly. The Clan fell silent. Bravepaw had been doing a lot of nothing for the past few sunrises. For her to volunteer to go on a patrol was surprising.

"Of course. Who else would like to go?" Starlingstrike asked. Icypaw, Tigerfang and Blueheart decided to come. Starlingstrike nodded and lead his patrol to the bramble barrier.

"Keep alert until we come back." He warned the Clan. "There could be another patrol waiting to attack, who knows?"

The patrol left camp and immediately went to the Mountain Path.

"Fresh SunClan scent. Follow it." Starlingstrike ordered. Bravepaw took this chance to learn the SunClan scent. It smelled of rock and dust.

"Could you imagine living in the mountains, walking on hard rock all day? My pads would get too sore." Icypaw commented. Bravepaw purred. She had missed talking with Icypaw. He'd been so busy lately, taking assessments all the time. He'll become a warrior

any sunrise now.

"Shh." Blueheart hissed. "This is serious."

Suddenly, Bravepaw heard paw steps. A ginger she-cat padded forward through the ferns. Three more cats trailed behind her. One was a dark brown tom, another was a small white she-cat, and the last was a gray she-cat who was only large enough to be an apprentice.

"Greetings, Starlingstrike." The ginger she-cat bowed her head to the DawnClan deputy. "I have come to speak with your leader."

"Do you really expect us to lead you into our camp, where you could attack us all?" Tigerfang hissed. The SunClan cats' pelts began to bristle, but they remained calm.

"How do we know we can trust you, Dayheart?" Starlingstrike asked the black tom.

"We are not MoonClan. We would not try and ambush a camp." Dayheart assured the DawnClan patrol. Fogstar must have reported the MoonClan ambush at one of the Gatherings. "Besides, this would not be the smartest battle patrol for Rainstar to arrange." The SunClan deputy added.

Starlingstrike paused for a moment, thinking. "Very well then. Bring them back to camp." He decided. The DawnClan patrol immediately fanned out around the SunClan patrol. Bravepaw stood next to the gray apprentice.

"I'm Shadepaw." She mewed, trying to be friendly. The white warrior nudged her. She glared down at the apprentice with amber eyes.

"This is not a Gathering. You shouldn't be socializing with enemy cats." She growled in a whisper.

"Sorry, Littleleap." Shadepaw whispered.

The patrol lead the DuskClan cats back to the camp. Gasps and snarls erupted from the rest of the DawnClan cats when they

arrived in the clearing. Fogstar was already standing on the Highmound.

"SunClan," she mewed as she held her head high. "What are you doing on our territory?"

"Fogstar of DawnClan," Dayheart began. "SunClan is suffering. We cannot find enough fresh-kill to support the needs of our Clan. Our kits and elder's are starving. The rock slides are killing off all our prey. We have come to ask for help."

Bravepaw jut realized how skinny the SunClan cats were. Their ribs stuck out from their pelts. She could even see Dayheart's backbone poking through her thick ginger coat.

Bravepaw heard Dustflight whisper to Swiftheart behind her. "Those mouse brains better not expect us to hunt for them." Swiftheart nodded in agreement.

"We ask permission to hunt on your territory, just for the next moon. We only wish to replenish the strength of our Clan." Dayheart meowed.

Fogstar stayed silent for a moment.

"Let me discuss this with my deputy." She finally mewed before beckoning Starlingstrike to her den.

The DawnClan cats glared at the SunClan patrol. Shadepaw shifted her feet nervously under the eyes of an enemy Clan.

"What do you think Fogstar will decide?" Icypaw prompted as he approached Bravepaw. She shrugged.

"I hope she decides against it." Bravepaw admitted. "We need as much prey as we can get for the coming leaf-bare." Icypaw nodded.

"I have a feeling she'll agree to it." Icypaw guessed. "SunClan is the only Clan we haven't had much problems with, besides the occasional clash for the forest area just beyond the Mountain Path."

Fogstar and Starlingstrike slinked from the leader's den and Fogstar

returned to her place on top of the Highmound.

"I will allow your Clan to have a share of our prey." Gasps, snarls, and meows of outrage erupted from the DawnClan cats. "Although, we are to hunt it for you, and it is only for a moon." Fogstar added.

Dayheart nodded. "Fair enough." She agreed.

"I suggest you send a patrol to the Mountain Path every sunhigh. We will have a patrol there waiting for you with your prey." Fogstar advised. The SunClan cats nodded.

Dayheart dipped her head. "Thank you, Fogstar. SunClan will not forget you did this." The deputy promised. Fogstar bowed her head in return.

The SunClan cats turned to leave. A DawnClan patrol: Swiftheart, Rubyfoot, Spotface, and Sharpwhisker, quickly circled them as they exited the camp.

"I can't believe she agreed to feed them!" Bravepaw heard Fallenrain exclaim. "SunClan might as well be kittypets begging at the foot of a twoleg den!"

"SunClan are in need." Fogstar mewed in defense of her decision. "It is not their fault that rock slides are killing their prey. You cannot forget that they are cats, too."

Fallenrain sighed and nodded. "I guess you're right." He admitted to his leader.

"Back in my day, SunClan would have never asked for help from another Clan. Not with their arrogant leader, Badgerstar, that is. I was glad when Rainstar took over." Bravepaw heard Sleepyeye comment.

"I do recall that Rainstar, Rainfoot at the time, was an exceptionally loyal deputy. I always knew he'd make a strong, responsible leader." Charredfur added.

Icypaw nudged Bravepaw. "Want to practice some battle moves?" He asked. Bravepaw shrugged and nodded. They began to head

towards the bramble barrier, Icypaw quickly mentioning to Blueheart that the two apprentices were going to the training hollow.

"I think I'm going to become a warrior soon." Icypaw meowed excitedly. "I can't wait." He admitted.

Bravepaw's heart dropped. She would have to spend the rest of her training with only Flowerpaw to train with. Plus, she would miss Icypaw in the apprentice's den.

"Oh... Well I'm excited for you, too!" Bravepaw exclaimed halfheartedly. Icypaw didn't seem to notice as they entered the training hollow.

"I can't wait until we can both be warriors. There will be so much we can do together!" He exclaimed. Bravepaw purred at the thought.

Icypaw and Bravepaw practiced battle moves together in the training hollow, laughing and enjoying their time together. Bravepaw hadn't felt this happy in over a half-moon.

We'll make the best warriors. Bravepaw thought. *We'll be a team.*

Chapter 7

Bravepaw's muscles vibrated as she raced down the steep hollow alongside her Clanmates. Her heart was pounding by the time she got to the bottom. She could see tons of cats, more than she'd ever seen before at once. *And SunClan isn't even here yet!*

A great pool was in the middle of the clearing. The light of the moon reflected off it, brightening the entire area. The hollow was open to the sky, since the spring was atop a mountain and there were no trees around it.

"Isn't it beautiful?" Icyfur asked as he stood next to Bravepaw. The white tom had received his warrior name almost a half-moon ago after he fought against a badger alongside Swiftheart and Rubyfoot. Bravepaw had ended up being more happy for him than disappointed, even though it meant that she wouldn't be able to spend as much time with him anymore.

Bravepaw glanced around the clearing. There were four giant stones, called the Great Stones placed around the Moon Spring. There was one for each leader of each Clan. Bravepaw watched as Fogstar leaped onto one, and then as a gray tom climbed onto another one on the opposite side of the Moon Spring.

"That's Smokestar of DuskClan." Starlingstrike told Bravepaw as he approached her from behind. "He's getting quite old. His deputy, Thunderstep, will likely take his place in leadership soon." He added.

Bravepaw noticed Shiverstar was already on a rock, sitting alone as he surveyed the cats below him. He found Bravepaw among them. His eyes narrowed as he looked at her. The darkness in his gaze caused Bravepaw to shiver and look away.

"SunClan should be here by now!" Flowerpaw meowed impatiently as she kneaded the ground. Bravepaw twitched her whiskers at her sister's excitement. This wasn't even her first Gathering!

"Come on, let's go talk to some other apprentices while we wait for SunClan." Icyfur suggested. He lead Bravepaw over to a group of apprentices with mixed scents. *Both MoonClan and DuskClan.* Bravepaw thought.

"Hey Icypaw! How's DawnClan?" A brown tom asked as the two apprentices padded towards the group.

"Icy*fur*," The white tom corrected him. "And DawnClan is doing well." He added.

"You're a warrior now?!" A mottled black and gray tom asked in disbelief.

"That's right. I fought a badger." Icyfur boasted. Bravepaw rolled her eyes.

"With the help of two of your Clanmates!" She reminded him. He rolled his eyes in response.

"Who's this?" A white tom with light brown patches asked, flicking his tail in Bravepaw's direction.

"This is Bravepaw. She would have come to the last Gathering, but she had an incident with a fox..." Icyfur trailed off. The brown apprentice's eyes widened.

"Foxes are so rare in our territory!" He exclaimed. "It's probably too wet for them." He guessed. Icyfur nodded.

"Well, Bravepaw, this is Dirtpaw," he gestured to the brown tom. "And this is Darkpaw. They're both from DuskClan." Bravepaw dipped her head and mewed a hello to them, which they returned.

"Also, this is Marshpaw. He's from MoonClan." Icyfur continued as he pointed to the white and brown tom. Bravepaw squeaked a hesitant hi to him.

"Don't worry. He's nice, unlike most of the MoonClan cats." Icyfur whispered in Bravepaw's ear. She nodded. Icyfur knows better than any cat about her distrust for MoonClan. Mostly because she used to spend so much time with him.

"Hey, here comes SunClan!" Dirtpaw meowed with excitement. Bravepaw turned to see bright pelts streaming down into the hollow. The SunClan cats began to weave amongst the rest of the forest cats as soon as they arrived.

"The leaders will probably give us lots of time to socialize tonight." Marshpaw pointed out. "The Clans are at such peace right now. They'd likely want to keep it that way."

Maybe all except for Shiverstar. Bravepaw mewed silently.

A ginger she-cat padded towards the group of apprentices. She smelled like Marshpaw, so she must be one of his Clanmates.

"I almost got stuck in a conversation with the medicine cats!" She mewed in exasperation. Then she noticed Bravepaw. "Who's that?" She spat, quite rudely.

Icyfur leaned in to Bravepaw's ear. "Don't mind Amberpaw. She can be a bit rude sometimes." He warned. Bravepaw nodded and stood up straighter.

"I'm Bravepaw." She meowed. Amberpaw looked her up and down for a moment, and then scowled.

"Oh, great, you're that cat that everyone's talking about." She grunted. "The cat who will supposedly 'save the Clans'!" She meowed in annoyance, almost as if she were jealous. Marshpaw groaned.

"Amberpaw, really? Do you have to be mean to every cat you meet?" He complained. Amberpaw ignored him.

"I'm sorry if that bothers you." Bravepaw mewed calmly to the ginger apprentice.

"Well don't be!" Amberpaw snarled as she padded past Bravepaw.

Icyfur shook his head. "Cats these days..." He muttered, most likely to himself.

A strong yowl rang out in the hollow and the chatter of the forest

cats began to die down. Bravepaw settled down with the other apprentices, next to Icyfur. She looked up at the four leaders atop the four Great Stones.

"Fogstar," Rainstar meowed. "How is the apprentice doing?"

Fogstar cast a quick glance at Bravepaw, making her realize it was her they were talking about.

"She trains well. Bravepaw is a strong and skillful cat." Fogstar answered. Bravepaw raised her head and straightened her posture at her leader's praise. She could sense Amberpaw glaring at her from a few tail-lengths away, but that didn't stop Bravepaw from being proud of herself. Lots of other cats turned to look at her. Bravepaw quickly felt embarrassed, and she was glad when the attention was dragged away from her.

Shiverstar stepped forward on his Great Stone. "MoonClan is thriving, despite the coming leaf-bare. Prey is plentiful in the Flat Lands." He explained. The other leaders nodded their heads, but Bravepaw could see the look of doubt in their eyes. Looking around at the MoonClan cats, she could see the ribs of some cats poking through their pelts.

"Did Shiverstar lie?" Bravepaw asked, leaning into Icyfur's ear. He nodded.

"Probably. You always want the other Clans to think you're strong and well fed, whether you really are or not." He whispered. Bravepaw nodded understandingly.

"DuskClan has two new warriors!" Smokestar announced as he stepped forward. "Nightfern and Raveneye!"

A brown tom and a black she-cat rose to their paws on the other side of the Moon Spring. The she-cat's pelt was so dark Bravepaw almost didn't see her, but her bright green eyes shone in the darkness like little lights. The two cats held their bodies tall and proud as cheers and yowls erupted in the hollow.

"Will Fogstar do that for you?" Bravepaw asked Icyfur.

Icyfur shrugged. "Maybe." He responded, but Bravepaw could hear the hope in his voice.

"DuskClan is also fending well." Smokestar continued "The river brings a steady supply of fish and we have plenty of kits in the nursery." This time it looked as if Smokestar was actually telling the truth, unlike Shiverstar. Unless their sleek pelts were able to hide it, the DuskClan cats looked strong and well fed.

"DawnClan is also doing well. We have a new warrior, Icyfur!" Icyfur stood up, his fur quivering with excitement. Yowling and chanting sounded. Darkpaw, Marshpaw, and Dirtpaw cheered especially loudly. Bravepaw joined in, pride for her friend bubbling in her stomach.

"Our medicine cat apprentice, Meadowpaw, has also become a full medicine cat alongside Feathermoon. Please welcome, Meadowfern!"

Bravepaw turned to see the sandy-colored she-cat standing next to her previous mentor. Her eyes were bright with excitement and pride as the Clans congratulated her.

Rainstar explained how the rock slides were killing off prey, but he did not mention that DawnClan was helping feed them. It infuriated Bravepaw after he took the credit for himself that SunClan was finding a way to eat.

"Why didn't he mention that *we're* the ones feeding *them*?" Bravepaw asked Icyfur, anger coating her meow.

"Even Fogstar knows that SunClan wouldn't want to appear weak to the other Clans. Especially with MoonClan being as vicious and bloodthirsty as they've been lately." The older cat replied.

The forest cats began to disperse as the Gathering came to an end. Fogstar joined her Clan as they began to head back down the Mountain Path.

"Did you like it?" Flowerpaw asked as she fell in step beside her sister.

"Yeah, it was fun to see cats from all the other Clans." Bravepaw answered honestly.

There was light chatter among the DawnClan cats as they returned to the camp. Flowerpaw and Spotface, who had both begun growing very fond of each other during the past moon, were talking about going on a hunting patrol for SunClan the next sunrise.

"We only have to hunt for them for another quarter-moon." Spotface reminded her.

As Bravepaw padded towards the apprentices' den she saw Sharpwhisker exit the nursery. The tortoiseshell she-cat had moved there only a quarter-moon ago when she found out she would be having Rockclaw's kits. Bravepaw had to admit that she was quite excited for the kits to come. Sharpwhisker was Blackstream's sister, so her kits would be Bravepaw's kin.

After the long night at the Gathering, Bravepaw was happy to relax in her nest. Pretty soon, Flowerpaw joined her sister and settled herself into her own nest. Bravepaw and Flowerpaw were the only apprentices at the moment, since Icyfur and Whiteshade had become warriors. They talked for awhile about the gathering before growing tired and quieting their meows.

Bravepaw stretched her tired muscles and positioned herself in a comphy position before drifting off into sleep.

Chapter 8

"Over here, I smell vole!" Firepaw's excited mew rang out through the forest air. He, along with his littermates, had been apprenticed only a quarter-moon ago. Bravepaw and Flowerpaw, having now four moons of training, were the most experienced apprentices at the moment. It was a hassle trying to put up with the younger apprentices' energy and excitement.

"Hush, or you'll scare every piece of prey in the forest off, and then we'll catch nothing." Littleshell, who was the ginger tom's mentor, hissed at him. The eager apprentice's enthusiasm quickly faded and he forced himself to be quiet.

Surprisingly, the vole hadn't been startled by Firepaw's shouting. Bravepaw watched as he tried stalking the vole, being careful not to cause a ruckus. When he was close enough, Bravepaw silently willed him to pounce, but the newly made apprentice was a heartbeat too late. The vole noticed him and got away.

"Fox dung!" He snarled. "I almost had it!"

"Next time try not to wait as long before you pounce." Bravepaw informed him. Firepaw nodded and padded towards his mentor, his head hanging low.

"That may have been our only chance for prey, and I blew it." Firepaw mumbled. "Since it's leaf-bare, there won't be *any* prey left!"

Bravepaw gave the bummed apprentice a nudge. "Don't worry, it's not easy on any apprentice's first hunt." Bravepaw thought back to her first hunt, and what a disaster that was. *At least I was able to out run that fox, or I would've been crow-food!* She thought, chuckling to herself.

"What are you laughing about?" Littleshell asked, twitching her whiskers with amusement.

Bravepaw shrugged. "Just thinking about my first hunt. Not every apprentice is chased by a fox while they're trying to catch a mouse." She mewed. Firepaw's eyes lit up.

"I remember when I was a kit and you told me that story!" He exclaimed. Fondness for the energetic apprentice swelled in Bravepaw's chest.

The small patrol carried on hunting. Despite the cold weather, Bravepaw managed to catch a mouse and Firepaw was able to catch a plump shrew to make up for missing the vole. It was an impressive catch, Bravepaw had to admit. The patrol had been out since sunrise, and it was already almost sunhigh. They decided to head back to camp.

"Look what I caught!" Firepaw boasted to his littermates, Brownpaw and Applepaw. Brownpaw's eyes widened as she inspected his catch.

"It's huge!" She exclaimed. Firepaw puffed out his chest.

"Very well caught, Firepaw." Starlingstrike meowed in praise of his son. Firepaw quivered with happiness at all the compliments he was recieving.

Blackstream came up to Bravepaw. "He'll make a wonderful young hunter." She commented.

Bravepaw nodded. "His skills are improving rapidly." She mewed.

"Speaking of, how are *your* skills coming along, Bravepaw?" Blackstream questioned. Bravepaw shrugged.

"Everything is going great, honestly. I enjoy hunting, I've perfected a lot of battle moves..." She trailed off as she couldn't think of anyhing else to say. "Patrols are good." She added. Blackstream nodded and gazed at her daughter, a quiet sigh escaping her lips.

"I'm so proud of you. You'll be the finest warrior in the forest." She murmured. Bravepaw nuzzled her mother's cheek.

"Thank you." She whispered. Blackstream dipped her head to

Bravepaw and then headed towards the warriors' den, casting one last glance at her daughter before entering.

Bravepaw turned and set her mouse in the fresh-kill pile, which was quite too small for her liking. Firepaw began to drag the shrew into the pile when Littleshell stopped him.

"The elders could all share that for a meal." She told him. He nodded and began taking the shrew to the elders' den.

"I can take it to them." Bravepaw offered as she watched him struggle to carry the fat animal. He dropped the prey at Bravepaw's forepaws.

"Thank you." He mewed gratefully. Bravepaw nodded and picked up the shrew to take it to the elders.

She padded into the dark and cozy den. Sleepyeye was, of course, sleeping, while Icefoot and Charredfur chatted quietly in the background of the den. Bravepaw made her way over to them and dropped the shrew in front of their paws.

"For you all to share." Bravepaw mewed, flicking her tail towards the two toms, and then at Sleepyeye.

Icefoot nodded. "Thank you, Bravepaw. That is a nice catch." He praised her.

Bravepaw shook her head. "I wish I could say I caught it, but it was actually Firepaw who made the catch on this one." She explained.

"Well then, good for him." Icefoot mewed, surprise hinting in his voice.

"He is learning quickly, for an energetic furball like him." Bravepaw informed. Charredfur nodded.

"I think he'll make a wonderful warrior one day, just as you will." He rasped. "After all, you do have a great destiny!"

Bravepaw turned hot with embarrassment, though the comment about her prophecy got on her nerves. She was not in a mood for

discussing her dark future.

"Thank you." Bravepaw mumbledbto the elder before making her way out of the den.

"I see you're becoming close with Icyfur." Icefoot spoke up, stopping her in her tracks. Bravepaw turned and nodded.

"He's a good friend." She meowed. Icefoot nodded.

"He's very fond of you." He murmured, half to himself. Then he looked up at Bravepaw. "He said he wanted to patrol with you today; you should go find him." He meowed. Bravepaw nodded and turned to exit the den.

She stepped into the clearing, her eyes scanning the area for an icy-white pelt. They finally landed on Icyfur, exactly who she was looking for. He was talking with Meadowfern near the warriors' den.

"What's it like being a medicine cat?" He asked. Meadowfern shrugged.

"Being a medicine cat is just as natural to me as being a warrior is to you." She answered. "You take interest in fighting, patrolling and hunting, while I take interest in healing the cats of our Clan and learning about herbs." She explained. *That's a good way to put it.* Bravepaw thought.

Icyfur's ears perked up when he noticed Bravepaw padding towards him and his sister. "Sorry Meadowfern, Bravepaw and I are going on a patrol!" He called as he got up to greet his friend. Meadowfern watched after the two cats in amusement.

"Have fun then, you two!" She called back.

"Ah, there you cats are." Starlingstrike mewed as Icyfur and Bravepaw approached. "You two will join Dustflight, Rockclaw, and I." He ordered, flicking his tail towards the two toms who were waiting by the bramble barrier. The rest of the three cats trotted towards the patrol and set off. Bravepaw could hear the second patrol; Brownpaw, her mentor Fallenrain, Swiftheart, and

Whiteshade, setting out in the opposite direction behind them to patrol Highoaks and the twoleg settlement.

Bravepaw's patrol was heading to replenish the boundaries near the Smallpond and the Tall Oak. They went to the Tall Oak first, since there weren't any Clans that bordered it, though they still needed a scent marker for rogues and other cats roaming the area.

The five cats arrived and Bravepaw began by spraying a nearby bush. They all continued until the border was strong enough to warn off any possible intruders.

"Come on, we should get to the Smallpond now." Starlingstrike mewed. Bravepaw and the rest of the group followed, letting their deputy lead the patrol.

When the patrol reached the Smallpond, there was something oddly different about it. The DuskClan scent was stronger than usual near the edge of the Smallpond, on DawnClan's side of the borderline. Bravepaw stepped towards it, sniffing the area.

"How dare they?" Dustflight hissed.

Rockclaw drew his lips back in a snarl and flattened his ears. "Who gave them the right to carry out this nonsense?"

"They trespassed on *our* territory!" Bravepaw confirmed in outrage.

Starlingstrike shook his head. "They not only trespassed, they reset the borders. With the current scent lines, the Smallpond is completely inaccessible to us." He explained. Suddenly realizing she was standing right next to the Smallpond, Bravepaw leapt back onto her side of the border.

"Not fair!" Bravepaw exclaimed. A low growl rumbled in Icyfur's throat beside her.

"We'll show them!" He snarled.

Bravepaw nodded. "DuskClan better be ready, because they have no idea what's coming for them!"

Chapter 9

A battle patrol lurked in the bushes near the Smallpond. It had been only a sunrise since the discovery of the border change. Now, the DawnClan cats were waiting for a DuskClan patrol to come check the Smallpond border. Then they'd pounce on them and attack them like a piece of prey.

The battle patrol consisted of seven cats; Bravepaw, Flowerpaw, Icyfur, Starlingstrike, Rubyfoot, Rockclaw and Dustflight. Feathermoon and Meadowfern also sat further back to help the injured later on. Each cat sat restlessly in wait of the enemy patrol. *This will be my first official battle!* Bravepaw realized.

"Remember, wait for my signal." Starlingstrike whispered. Bravepaw tensed her muscles as she saw an oncoming DuskClan patrol. She recognized Dirtpaw as one of the cats. Raveneye walked beside him, along with the DuskClan deputy Thunderstep. There was also a white and ginger tom that did not look familiar to Bravepaw.

As the DuskClan patrol approached, one of them scrunched their noses. Bravepaw held her breath. *Have they detected us?*

"It smells a lot like DawnClan here, more than usual!" Raveneye exclaimed.

The unfamiliar tom shook his head. "It's probably just because we've only recently switched the borders. I can't believe they haven't done anything about it yet." He meowed. At that, Starlingstrike gave three quick flicks of his tail, the sign to attack. The seven cats leapt from the bushes, yowling, and landed atop the DuskClan patrol.

Bravepaw sunk her claws into the first pelt she came in contact with. A brown pelt wriggled beneath her, spitting and yowling. *Dirtpaw!*

Bravepaw's grip suddenly loosened, and the DuskClan apprentice flung her off his back. She flew into the air and landed on her feet,

though she stumbled as she hit the ground.

"Bravepaw?" He gasped. Bravepaw took this chance to leap at him again. *We're enemies now!*

She made a deep scratch mark down his flank, making him to screech in pain and anger. He connected a blow to Bravepaw's head, causing her to stagger backwards and her vision to fuzz for a heartbeat. Unfortunately, it allowed Dirtpaw just enough time to leap onto Bravepaw's back. His claws sunk deep into her fur, piercing her back and shoulders. With a snarl, she reared up and fell onto her back, squashing the apprentice underneath her. She had practiced that move many times to perfect it.

"Largefang, go get reinforcements!" Thunderstep yowled as he worked at fending off Rockclaw and Rubyfoot. Bravepaw saw the white and ginger tom pelt away towards the DuskClan camp.

With Dirtpaw still struggling underneath her back, Bravepaw flipped herself so that she was hovering over him and began batting at his head with her forepaws. He was still on his back against the ground, which gave Bravepaw the feeling of power against him.

Feeling a sudden sharp pain on her stomach, Dirtpaw had begun scraping his hind legs against Bravepaw's belly. She nimbly hopped backwards to avoid any more wounds from his clever move.

Suddenly, more cats streamed from DuskClan's territory. Largefang had come back with Nightfern and Darkpaw. A plain ginger tom, who Bravepaw remembered being called by the name of Longclaw, hurtled into battle next to Darkpaw.

Dirtpaw, who was badly injured by now, raced away in admittance of defeat. Feeling triumphant, Bravepaw hurried to help her sister battle the warrior Largefang. Her belly was stinging, but she fought to ignore the pain as she snapped at the warrior's leg.

A stinging slice to her flank made Bravepaw whip around to find Nightfern glaring at her. Without hesitation, the black she-cat charged at Bravepaw and barreled into her, knocking the breath from her and pummeling her into the ground. Her teeth sunk into

Bravepaw's right hind leg, the same one that had been injured during the fox chase. Hissing with great pain and rage, Bravepaw lashed out at the first thing she could hit. Her claws raked across the she-cat's muzzle and she yelped in pain.

A second DawnClan battle patrol swooped in to help. Blackstream, Tigerfang, Blueheart, and Spotface hurried into battle.

Nightfern jumped on top of Bravepaw's back, her claws gripping tightly into her pelt. She bit down hard on Bravepaw's shoulder. Bravepaw yowled and swung her head back, butting the black cat off her shoulders. She clawed at Nightfern's ear, ripping it to leave a scar for her to remember. Pain coursed throughout her entire body.

"DuskClan, fall back!" Thunderstep yowled. Immediately, the DuskClan cats began to cower below the DawnClan cats and back away towards their camp. Sending one last hiss her way, Bravepaw sent Nightfern pelting back to her camp, followed by the rest of her Clan.

Meadowfern and Feathermoon rushed towards the injured cats, carrying bundles of herbs with them. Bravepaw looked around the cats, assessing which ones were most injured. Blood stained the floor of the forest. Suddenly realizing how exhausted she was, Bravepaw slumped to the ground and began licking her wounds. The pain finally caught up with her and they began to sting now that she wasn't focused on anything else.

A pitiful cry from Flowerpaw made Bravepaw look up. Flowerpaw darted towards a black mound that was laying on the ground, lifeless as it seemed.

Blackstream.

Meadowfern was hovered above her, trying to help her. Bravepaw hopped up and bounded towards her mother, fear washing over her pelt. *No, Blackstream!*

She pressed her muzzle into her mother's bloodstained pelt. "Can you save her?" Bravepaw asked hopefully. Feathermoon came up after taking care of the other cats and rested her tail comfortingly

on Bravepaw's flank.

"We'll try the best we can." She promised.

Bravepaw offered to help Flowerpaw and Tigerfang carry her mother's body back to the camp. She was barely able to support her body since her own wounds hurt so badly, but she wasn't going to let her sister and father take on the task alone.

"All this, and only for the Smallpond?" Flowerpaw meowed. "What was the point? There's plenty of other places to hunt and get water in our territory!" She exclaimed in despair.

When they arrived back at camp, they were greeted by the cats that had stayed back from the fight. Sharpwhisker, despite her heavy belly, bounded forwards when she saw Blackstream. Grief clouded in her eyes as she watched her sister being carried to the medicine den.

"Set her down on this moss," Feathermoon instructed. "Meadowfern and I will take it from here."

"You'll save her, won't you?" Bravepaw asked before leaving. Feathermoon gave the apprentice a sympathetic look.

"I promise I'll do all that I can." She whispered.

Chapter 10

A long pelt brushed past Bravepaw as a cat squeezed past her. She lifted her gaze to see Sleepyeye picking up the body that much of DawnClan had sat vigil for during the previous night.

Blackstream was dead.

Bravepaw watched in sorrow as the elders carried her mother's body towards the entrance of the camp so they could bury it. She knew her mother watched them from StarClan now.

Bravepaw stood up and stumbled toward the apprentices' den, her vision clouding with grief. After sitting a long night of vigil, she wanted to do nothing but sleep.

She curled in her nest, wrapping her tail over her nose, and drifted into an empty, dreamless sleep.

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"Here's some fresh-kill," Firepaw meowed hesitantly as he set a sparrow down in front of Bravepaw. "I caught it specially for you."

Bravepaw nodded and took a reluctant bite out of the fresh-kill. The taste made her realize how hungry she was, though she couldn't bring herself to take another bite. Even though her mother's death was already a quarter-moon ago, grief was still too much to bear.

"Thanks," She whispered to the kind apprentice. He dipped his head and walked away toward Littleshell, who gave him an approving nod.

"Bravepaw!"

The white and gray she-cat slowly looked up to see Fogstar standing in front of her den, staring straight at her. Bravepaw raised herself to her paws and padded toward her leader, leaving the unfinished sparrow on the ground.

Fogstar beckoned the apprentice inside her den with her tail, not taking notice of the sparrow that would soon turn to crow-food. Bravepaw crawled inside and sat on the dusty floor of the den. Fogstar curled into her mossy bedding and looked at Bravepaw with yellow eyes.

"You fought with much courage in the recent battle." She praised, though Bravepaw didn't feel the usual sensation of pride that normally came from a compliment.

"I know you're just getting over the death of Blackstream, and it's also a bit early for this..." Fogstar paused before continuing.

"I would like the make you a warrior early."

Bravepaw pricked her ears. Did she just hear her leader correctly?

"What?" She asked, sounding quite mouse-brained. Fogstar's whiskers twitched once in slight amusement before she replied.

"I am willing to make you a warrior early." She repeated. "Of course, you will still need to travel to the Star Cave. Though, I will not force you to continue training, and there will be no assessments for you to pass. This is a very rare occasion to you as an apprentice, for you show exceptional skills." She explained. For the first time since the battle, excitement surged through Bravepaw. The grief from the passing of her mother seemed to slip away, leaving the apprentice to feel free again.

"I would love that!" She exclaimed. Fogstar purred.

"Very well then," she meowed. "I will arrange for Starlingstrike to take you to the Star Cave tonight. Go prepare to leave; stretch out your muscles and get some rest. Don't eat anything. You mustn't eat before dreaming with StarClan." She meowed. Bravepaw hesitated.

"What about Flowerpaw?" She asked.

Fogstar sighed. "Look, Bravepaw, your sister is doing well in her training, too. But, I can see that you are no ordinary cat. With the prophecy that you are involved in, you must choose to walk a different path than your sister. That includes becoming a warrior

before she does, and that's okay." She mewed. "There are going to be many sacrifices you will have to make in the future. It is a part of your destiny."

Bravepaw sighed and nodded. "I understand, Fogstar. I just always wished that we would share our warrior ceremony, and that we'd get to sit vigil together." She admitted.

"I'm sorry, Bravepaw. This is one of those sacrifices you must make. Remember, the Clan must come first." Fogstar reminded her. Bravepaw nodded and left the leader's den. She made her way to the apprentices' den to get some rest.

Stretching her muscles, Bravepaw settled down in a comfy spot in the grass. She gazed around the clearing from her spot in front of the apprentices' den. Firepaw and Applepaw were practicing battle moves in the thick of the camp. They were quickly scolded by Swiftheart, who was mentoring Applepaw, and he told them to make themselves useful and clear out the elders' bedding.

Bravepaw looked over as Flowerpaw, Rubyfoot, Blueheart and Dustflight made their way into the camp, dropping prey into the fresh-kill mound. Guilt stabbed her heart as she remembered that she would be abandoning her sister soon.

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Bravepaw stood up, stretching one last time, as the sky grew a fiery red and orange. It would soon be time for her to leave on her journey to the Star Cave.

Bravepaw met Starlingstrike at the warriors' den, where they crossed the clearing toward the bramble barrier. A white flash caught Bravepaw's eye, and she turned to see Icyfur bounding forward to meet her.

"Where are you going?" He asked Bravepaw.

"I am taking Bravepaw to the Star Cave." Starlingstrike responded for her. Icyfur's eyes glinted with confusion.

"So soon?" He asked in disbelief. The deputy sighed.

"These are things that need to happen, Icyfur. Now, I want you to go lead a hunting patrol with Swiftheart, Applepaw, and Rockclaw." He commanded, sending the white warrior off with a flick of his tail.

The two cats left the camp and headed for the Star Cave. They traveled across DawnClan territory toward the Mountain Path. When they began to climb it, questions raced through Bravepaw's head and her heart began to beat harder and faster in excitement.

"Will I see StarClan?" She asked.

"Possibly. Only StarClan chooses whether it is time for you to meet them or not." Starlingstrike responded.

They climbed up the mountain slope until they reached the hollow where the Moon Spring lie. Starlingstrike veered around the hollow and climbed up yet another set of rocks. Bravepaw followed, though her muscles were starting to feel the soreness of the journey. She wished she could have had some of Feathermoon's traveling herbs.

When the two cats reached the top of the rockwall, a dark cave stood before them.

"This is the Star Cave." Starlingstrike meowed. "Come." Her mentor ordered. He advanced into the depths of the black cave.

Bravepaw and Starlingstrike only had to walk a couple of tree-lengths before numerous bright, paw-sized dots began to appear on the floor beneath them. Bravepaw glanced up and found that the roof of the cave was now open to the sky, allowing the stars to shine brightly down onto the reflective floor of the cave.

"These are the warriors of StarClan who shine down into the cave." Starlingstrike meowed. "Come." He ordered as he padded toward one of the many reflections of the stars. Bravepaw began to follow him, the strange reflective ground slippery beneath her pads.

"Place your paw on top of one of the stars." Her mentor instructed. Bravepaw did as she was told, then watched as Starlingstrike lay down on the chilly floor. Bravepaw copied his actions, resting her

head on the paw that was placed on the star.

Bravepaw had barely closed her eyes when a sweeping current spiraled her into darkness. Opening her eyes, she tried to cry out, but her voice faltered and nothing came out. Legs flailing and heart racing, Bravepaw plunged into a black void.

Suddenly her paws came in contact with solid ground again. Bravepaw found herself in a clearing of tall grass, an area much like the Flat-land in MoonClan territory. Her pelt bristled as cats raced towards her. Blackness engulfed her once again as a sudden blow to her head knocked her backwards.

This time Bravepaw was in a spot that looked somewhat like Highoaks. Huge, dark shapes crept around her in the shadows. The screeches of anguish coming from far off distracted Bravepaw. Suddenly a huge cat, larger than any cat before, leaped out at her with lighting-fast speed and Bravepaw once again fell into a shadowy void.

"Beware the mighty ones, Bravepaw." A faint, echoing voice whispered in her ear, ruffling the fur inside it. Blurry shapes of dead cats swirled around Bravepaw's head in a flurry. Dark spots covered her vision and she let herself fall backward into nothingness.

The dank smell of the cave filled Bravepaw's nose as she woke with a jolt. Her limbs were shaking and she was breathing heavily. Starlingstrike was already sitting up, his amber eyes staring at her in worry.

"Your dream wasn't very pleasant, was it?" He whispered. Bravepaw shook her head in the milky half-light of the moon. "Neither was mine." He mewed, half to himself. The golden tom quickly stood and whisked Bravepaw to her feet with his tail.

"Quickly, we must get back to camp." He mewed with sudden urgency. Bravepaw followed him as he exited the cave and descended down the mountain slope.

"What happened?" Bravepaw asked.

"I must not share with you what I saw in my dreams." Starlingstrike answered. "And you are not to tell anyone of your own dreams."

The sun was just rising by the time Starlingstrike and Bravepaw arrived back at camp. Despite the early hour, the Clan was already beginning to stir. Fogstar burst from her den, alerting the other warriors who were in the clearing. She immediately crossed the clearing to greet Starlingstrike. They gave each other a knowing look and entered Fogstar's den.

"Bravepaw!" Flowerpaw's shrill voice rang out in the clearing. Bravepaw turned to see a black and white pelt bouncing towards her. Flowerpaw stopped in front of her sister. "Where were you?" She asked.

Bravepaw sighed, scared for her sister's reaction. "I was at the Star Cave." She responded hesitantly. Outrage and jealousy flared in Flowerpaw's eyes.

"Why didn't I come, too?" She asked angrily. Bravepaw caught a glimpse of her sister's unsheathed claws.

"Flowerpaw, you know of the prophecy I'm a part of. Things are going to be different from now on." Bravepaw warned calmly. "And... I'm going to become a warrior before you do." She added quietly. Flowerpaw's eyes widened in shock and betrayal.

"But, we were going to become warriors together! We were going to sit vigil together! We were going to do *everything* together!" She wailed. Bravepaw looked at the ground, a fierce feeling of sadness and longing tugging at her heart.

"I know," she whispered. "And I'm sorry." With that, she padded away towards the apprentices den, a lost feeling deep inside her chest.

Chapter 11

"I, Fogstar, leader of DawnClan, call upon my warrior ancestors to look down on this apprentice. She has trained hard to understand the ways of your noble code, and I commend her to you as a warrior in her turn." Fogstar gazed at Bravepaw, her yellow eyes piercing the warrior-to-be through and through. "Bravepaw, do you promise to uphold the warrior code, even at the cost of your life?"

"I do." Bravepaw meowed solemnly.

"Then by the power of StarClan, I give you your warrior name. Bravepaw, from this moment on you will be known as Bravestorm, for the storm you were born in. StarClan honors your unbreakable courage and fierce loyalty to your Clan. We welcome you as a full warrior of DawnClan."

Fogstar rested her muzzle on top of Bravestorm's head. The new warrior gave her leader a gentle lick on the shoulder. Cheers erupted from the Clan.

"Bravestorm! Bravestorm!"

Bravestorm surveyed the clearing. Firepaw, Brownpaw, and Applepaw whooped and yowled, jumping up and down. Starlingstrike also cheered with pride for his former apprentice. She fixed her gaze on Flowerpaw, who finally lifted her head to cheer her sister's new name. Tigerfang also cheered proudly for his daughter. A pang struck Bravestorm's heart as she wished deeply that her mother could be with her to see this moment. But, she knew she would be watching from StarClan.

"Bravestorm!" Icyfur's excited meow made Bravestorm turn around. "I can't believe your already a warrior!" He exclaimed.

"Yeah, it's really special." Bravestorm agreed. She glanced over at Flowerpaw, who was looking back at Bravestorm. They made eye contact for barely a heartbeat before Flowerpaw turned and made

her way into the apprentices' den. Bravestorm realized with a jolt that she wouldn't be sleeping there anymore.

"Come on, I already made your nest for you in the warriors' den." Icyfur mewed, as if her were reading Bravestorm's mind. He lead her into the warriors' den, where Bravestorm saw her new nest of moss and starling feathers placed neatly next to Icyfur's nest.

"Thank you." She meowed.

Icyfur dipped his head. "It was no big deal."

Bravestorm and Icyfur padded to the middle of the clearing, where Starlingstrike was arranging hunting patrols.

"Bravestorm, Icyfur, Swiftheart, and Whiteshade, will you four go hunt by the Smallpond?" Starlingstrike asked. Bravestorm nodded and followed the other three cats out of camp.

"So Bravestorm, how do you think Flowerpaw feels about you becoming a warrior before her, even though you're both sisters?" Whiteshade asked. When they were a few tree-lengths from camp.

Bravestorm shrugged. "She may be upset now, but I think she'll get over it." She answered. "Besides, she'll become a warrior herself in less than a moon."

"But, don't you feel bad? Your sister *always* talked about the two of you becoming warriors together." The white she-cat continued, as if she were trying to make Bravestorm feel bad.

"Whiteshade, leave her alone." Icyfur growled. "It wasn't her descion, it was something that had to be done."

Whiteshade gave a snarl as she rolled her eyes. She padded forward ahead of the group, lashing her tail. Bravestorm saw Swiftheart shake his head in annoyance, and she stifled a chuckle.

The hunting patrol carried on walking quietly, with Whiteshade still leading. When they reached the Smallpond, a DuskClan patrol was already there checking the borders. They glared at the passing DawnClan cats before turning away and proceeding with their

patrolling.

Bravestorm stopped and opened her mouth, trying to pick out prey scent. She picked up the scent of a vole, and then dropped into a crouch. She followed the scent until she found the prey scurrying among the roots of a tree. Being careful not to drag her tail through the leaves, Bravestorm quietly stalked the vole. After waiting a couple of heartbeats, she pounced on the vole, killing it with a swift bite to the neck.

"Nice catch!" Swiftheart complimented. Whiteshade snarled.

"That's puny! It will hardly feed an elder!" She complained. Bravestorm glared at the white she-cat.

"Shut up, will you?" Icyfur growled. "All you've done since we left camp is bother everyone!"

Bravestorm caught the look of sheer hurt that crossed Whiteshade's face, though Icyfur missed it. It lasted only a heartbeat before it transformed to anger. "Hmph!" She growled before storming away.

"Good riddance!" Icyfur muttered.

"Whiteshade is always grumpy, don't mind her." Swiftheart mewed.

The patrol carried on hunting without Whiteshade. They ended up catching an exceptional amount of fresh-kill, pleasing Bravestorm with the knowledge that her Clan would be well fed this night.

Bravestorm, Icyfur, and Swiftheart carried their fresh-kill back to the camp, earning mews of approval and praise from their Clanmates when they returned. Whiteshade glared at the patrol from across the clearing.

"Well done, you three." Starlingstrike meowed.

Bravestorm placed her vole and mouse in the fresh-kill mound, followed by Icyfur's plump squirrel and Swiftheart's mice.

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Bravestorm watched as the Clan settled down to sleep. She was sitting vigil after her first day as a warrior. Gazing up at the stars, a purr rose in her throat at the thought that Blackstream was watching her now.

Bravestorm focused her gaze on the bramble barrier. *I have to protect my Clan,* She thought. *My Clan comes first, over anything else.*

Chapter 12

Bravestorm crawled into the nursery, the sweet aroma of milk and warmth bathing her tongue. She hadn't been in there since the day she became an apprentice. *Why does it feel so small?*

A small orange and brown bundle was curled up against Sharpwhisker's belly, suckling hungrily. The new mother gazed down at her kit with love.

"His name is Orangekit." She declared. Feathermoon allowed a purr to rise in her throat. Bravestorm bent down and gave the recently born kit a gentle lick. Pride rose in her belly at the thought that he was her kin.

"He's wonderful." She murmured. Sharpwhisker nodded in agreement.

Behind her, Rockclaw pushed his way into the nursery. A mixture of pride and confusion filled his gaze once he looked at his kit.

"Only one?" He asked. Sharpwhisker nodded, looking up at her mate as if she were challenging him to say that the one they had wasn't already perfect. She lashed her tail once as she looked back down at her kit, happiness immediately replacing the previous look of annoyance.

"His name is Orangekit." She repeated flatly, obviously disappointed with her mate for acting unhappy with their one kit. Bravestorm placed her tail on Rockclaw's shoulder, leading him out of the nursery.

"Let's let Sharpwhisker rest for now." She told him. She glanced back just in time to see Sharpwhisker flash Bravestorm a look of appreciation.

Rockclaw padded off to the warriors' den while Bravestorm padded toward the fresh-kill mound. It felt like ages since she'd settled

down for a nice meal. She carried the plump mouse she'd picked up toward the warriors' den to go eat it.

Seating herself outside the warriors' den, Bravestorm gorged herself with prey. *Mmm,* she thought, closing her eyes as the tender juices flowed through her mouth.

"Bravestorm, wake up!" An amused voice shouted. Bravestorm opened her eyes to see her sister, Flowertail, who had been made a warrior nearly a half-moon ago. Her old bond with her sister had rekindled since, much to the disapproval of Whiteshade, who still enjoyed bickering with Bravestorm.

"Enjoying that fresh-kill?" Flowertail teased. Bravestorm swallowed the last of her mouse.

"I can't lie, it was a good one."

"Icyfur caught it." Flowertail remarked. Bravestorm's pelt grew hot, and a queasy feeling developed in the pit of her stomach. Ever since she became a warrior, she and Icyfur had grown closer and closer. She didn't know why, but Bravestorm had sometimes found herself wishing she was more than just friends with Icyfur.

"Well, he did a nice job." Bravestorm tried to meow nonchalantly. A glint of curiosity appeared in Flowertail's eyes, but she kept quiet.

"Are you going to the Gathering tonight?" She asked instead.

Bravestorm nodded. "Fogstar said she wanted me to come, so she can tell the other Clans I've been made a warrior." She mewed. Flowertail sighed.

Bravestorm gave her a curious look. "What's wrong?"

Flowertail hesitated. "I may sound selfish, but I honestly wish that you were just a normal cat like me, or any other cat for that matter. I find it weird that the other Clans talk about *my* sister at Gatherings." She admitted. "I always feel like you're better than me."

"Flowertail," Bravestorm began, her heart breaking. "I am *not* better than you. I am equal to every cat in the forest, I just happen to be

the cat who will save the Clans. That does not makes me better than you." Bravestorm promised. Flowertail pressed her muzzle against Bravestorm's cheek. "And trust me, I wish *all the time* that I was a normal cat, too." She added.

A purr rumbled in Flowertail's throat. "Thank you." The black and white she-cat murmured. Bravestorm purred in response.

The two sat quietly together until the sun started to set. Bravestorm stood and stretched her muscles, followed by Flowertail. Fogstar emerged from her den and began picking the cats that would go to the Gathering.

"Starlingstrike, Rockclaw, and Blueheart, I want you to lead at the head of the group with me. Firepaw, Brownpaw, Applepaw, and their mentors will make up the rear. Bravestorm, Flowertail, Whiteshade, Spotface, and Dustflight will also come along. And, of course, Feathermoon and Meadowfern will be with us. The rest of you will stay behind and guard the camp." Fogstar decided. A pang of dismay struck Bravestorm as she realized her leader didn't call Icyfur's name.

Bravestorm sighed and followed her sister toward the bramble barrier, where they waited for the other cats to get ready to leave. Icyfur gave Bravestorm a wave with his tail from across the clearing, which she then returned.

"I'm so excited, our first Gathering as warriors!" Flowertail exclaimed. Bravestorm couldn't help a purr. Though, for some reason, she didn't feel as excited as her sister. Something told her tonight would cause trouble.

The DawnClan cats began to head toward the Moon Spring. Bravestorm suspected they'd be the first Clan to arrive, since they usually left later than this.

Spotface fell in step beside Flowertail "Are you excited?" He asked her, brushing his pelt against her's. Bravestorm strained her ears to listen.

Flowertail nodded excitedly. "Oh yes, I can't wait!"

Spotface purred. "Starlingstrike said that Fogstar might let him make a a special announcement."

A special announcement? The tugging in her stomach reminded Bravestorm about her "bad feeling". She felt that it might have something to do with this announcement.

Oh , StarClan , please let tonight go well !

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"These are DawnClan's two newest warriors: Flowertail and Bravestorm!" Fogstar yowled. Chanting filled the hollow as Bravestorm and her sister stood up. Glancing at Shiverstar, she saw that he wasn't cheering, but scowling at her. Bravestorm tried to ignore him, but she could feel his disapproving gaze burning into her pelt throughout the entire Gathering. The "bad feeling" gave another tug at her stomach.

"DuskClan is serving well." Smokestar announced, casting a challenging glare at Fogstar. The other leaders proceeded to explain that their Clan was also doing good, but that was to be expected. It was newleaf, after all. Soon greenleaf would come, and the Clans will thrive.

When the Gathering was just about the be concluded, Fogstar spoke up. "My deputy, Starlingstrike, has something to say." She yowled. The hollow grew silent as Starlingstrike leapt onto the DawnClan Great Stone beside Fogstar.

"I took my apprentice, Bravestorm, to the Star Cave about a moon ago." He paused. "I know that no cat is supposed to share what they dream at the Star Cave, but StarClan had a message for the rest of the Clans."

"Well, what did they say?" An impatient growl came from the MoonClan side of the hollow. Starlingstrike flicked his tail once.

"They didn't *say* anything. They showed me."

The golden tabby looked at his paws for a moment, then rose his head to speak.

"I was standing on the Flatlands of MoonClan territory. The full moon shone high above me. But then, I watched as it turned blood red, and it plumetted down into the horizon. A sillouhetted face of a cat appeared in place of the moon. A voice whispered, 'Beware the mighty ones. They will destroy one of the Clans.' Then it was gone, and I awoke."

Bravestorm gasped. That message was similar to the one she had heard! She shifted her paws restlessly, unease making the fur one her back bristle.

Smokestar was the first to speak up. "Us leaders need to discuss this in private. We shall arrange a meeting time." He meowed.

"We should meet at the back here in one sunrise." Fogstar decided. The other leaders nodded in agreement. The Gathering came to an end as the leaders hopped down from the Great Stones and back into the ranks of their Clans.

The forest cats were mingling for a while after the Gathering, since there was some spare time. Bravestorm saw Whiteshade make her way towards Amberpaw, who Shiverstar had announced the be Amberfang.

"Thats an odd pairing." Flowertail commented, flicking her tail toward Amberfang and Whiteshade. "They used to hate each other."

Bravestorm just shrugged. "Its probably nothing. Come on, let's go talk to the other cats. Maybe we can meet someone new." She suggested. Flowertail shrugged, looking back once more at the two she-cats before following Bravestorm.

"Bravestorm now, huh?" Marshpaw asked, a hint of amusmemet in his voice.

"Yup," Bravestorm mewed proudly. "And what about you?"

Marshpaw shook his head. "I still have some assessments to pass." He mewed. "But I should be a warrior by the next Gathering."

Bravestorm saw Dirtpaw—Dirtpelt, now—standing a few fox-lengths away from the small group. He was eyeing her with an

emotionless expression. Bravestorm guessed he still hadn't forgiven her for attacking him during the border skirmish.

Nightfern padded up next to him and whispered something in his ear, glaring at Bravestorm. He nodded and padded away with her. Bravestorm assumed she wasn't very popular among DuskClan cats.

"DawnClan, it is time we head home!" Fogstar yowled above the chatter of the forest cats. The cats of DawnClan began to follow their leader up out of the hollow and back to DawnClan camp.

After finally reaching the camp, Bravestorm made her way to the warriors' den for some sleep. *I'm exhausted!*

"Bravestorm!" A hiss came from the ferns beside the den. Bravestorm peered in and found a white pelt shining through the leaves.

Icyfur .

Padding toward the ferns, Bravestorm ducked underneath them and crawled in next to Icyfur. Their muzzles were a mouse-length apart.

"I have to show you something," he whispered as he crept through the plants. Bravestorm followed him, thorns and leaves snagging her pelt. *So much for getting any sleep...*

Icyfur lead her to the back of the camp, where dirtplace was located. Bravestorm wrinkled her nose at the pungent stench of other cats' waste. She was glad when Icyfur found a hole in the camp wall for them to squeeze through.

"What is it?" Bravestorm hissed, an edge of irritation in her voice. Icyfur didn't seem to notice as he gestured for her to follow him with a flick of his tail. *Ignorant mouse-brain.* She thought, though she didn't really mean it.

She followed Icyfur past the Smallpond, past the Tall Oak, and finally he stopped near the twoleg settlement. A growl almost rumbled in Bravestorm's throat. *He decided to drag me* here *in the middle of the night?*

"What's this about?" Bravestorm growled. Icyfur lashed his tail, his facial tone growing impatient.

"Relax, will you? This is important to me." He meowed through gritted teeth. "I'm telling you because I can trust you the most."

Bravestorm immediately softened her expression a and fixed her attitude. Guilt flooded her body, along with a sense of shame.

"I'm sorry." She murmured. Icyfur touched her shoulder with his tail.

"It's alright." He assured his friend. "Anyway, I was hunting alone in this spot earlier today. I figured there'd be some prey here since a patrol hadn't been hunting her in a while." He paused. "You won't believe what happened."

Bravestorm cocked her head to the side. "What was it?"

"A kittypet came up to me." He whispered moving closer to Bravestorm as if he were telling a secret and someone would hear him. "Her name was Sugar, and she said she knew one of the cats from this Clan." He meowed, a hint of accusation in his voice. He gave Bravestorm an expectant look. "She said the cat's name was Bravepaw."

Knowing she could trust him, Bravestorm admitted it to him. "Okay, I once met Sugar at the scent line. Anyways, why did she bring that up? And why was she in our territory?"

Icyfur shrugged. "She said the last time you two met, you asked about a cat who was named Fangheart. She saw me and wanted me to tell you that she knows a cat who once knew Fangheart."

Bravestorm nodded, confusion clouding her thoughts. Sugar wanted nothing to do with her, and now she was trying to help her? Bravestorm shook her head.

"Why did you want to know about Fangheart, anyways?" Icyfur asked quietly. Bravestorm shifted her paws.

"Well, you seemed interested in learning more about her, so I guess

I wanted to see if I could get anymore information for you." Bravestorm admitted sheepishly. A purr rose in Icyfur's throat.

"Thanks." He murmured, pressing his muzzle up against Bravestorm's cheek. A surge of excitement raced through Bravestorm's body, only to be extinguished when Icyfur pulled away and began to head forward toward the twoleg settlement.

"What are you doing?" She asked him. He turned around to face her.

"Well, don't you want to find that cat? The one who knows Fangheart?" He asked. Bravestorm was about to protest, but then Icyfur continued walking and she decided against it. Following him to the edge of the scent line, Bravestorm's pelt began to bristle.

"Relax, Bravestorm." Icyfur soothed, pressing against her flank. He lead her forward and the two cats trekked on into the twoleg settlement together, unknowing of what awaited them.

Chapter 13

The bright, multicolored dens caused Bravestorm's eyes to ache as she and Icyfur padded warily through the twoleg settlement.

"How exactly do you plan on finding this cat?" Bravestorm hissed. Icyfur shrugged.

"I'll figure something out." He mumbled. Bravestorm's ears flattened in annoyance.

Suddenly, a familiar scent wafted into Bravestorm's nose. *Sugar!*

Icyfur must have smelt it too, because his ears perked up and he headed toward one of the dens. He sat outside the den, looking up at it with patient eyes.

Bravestorm padded around the den, trying to find a way in. She discovered a small flap that was dangling open. Bravestorm peeked her head inside the den, seeing nothing but blackness since the moonlight didn't reach inside.

"Bravestorm! What are you doing?" Icyfur screeched. She immediately jerked her head from the den and looked at him.

"I smell Sugar's scent in there." She meowed. She noticed that Icyfur's white pelt was bristling in the shadowy light of the moon.

"Do you not smell the scent of twolegs?" He whispered. Bravestorm shrugged. She wasn't going to be afraid of a senseless, no-furred twoleg.

"So? Twolegs don't scare me. Besides, we have to talk to Sugar." Bravestorm replied before sticking her head back through the flap. She let her eyes adjust to the darkness before creeping into the den, being careful not to cause a ruckus.

Bravestorm spotted a white, sleeping lump of fur on the floor on the other side of the den. Bravestorm hissed in frustration as she saw

her problem.

Three twolegs blocked her path to the kittypet.

Cautiously working her way around the bodies, Bravestorm stepped over the extremely long limbs of the twolegs and stopped when she was next to Sugar.

She prodded the she-cat with a paw, remembering to keep her claws fully sheathed. The kittypet stirred before lifting her head. Her eyes widened when she saw Bravestorm, but to Bravestorm's luck she kept quiet and didn't question her when the warrior lead her out of the den.

When they emerged, Icyfur breathed a sigh of relief. "I thought you were gonna be crow-food in that den!" He exclaimed. Sugar gave him a look of confusion.

"Den?" She echoed.

"A den, as in that thing." Bravestorm flicked her tail at the twoleg den.

The kittypet shook her head. "Actually, that's a *tent*." She corrected.

Tent. The word sounded weird in Bravestorm's head. She shook her head. *Why do twolegs have such weird names for everything?*

Icyfur padded toward Sugar. "Anyway, I think you can guess why we're here." He mewed. Sugar nodded and motioned for the two warriors to follow her with her tail.

Sugar lead them to a circular area. A stack of charred wood and twigs were placed in the middle, as if it had once been on fire. Small stones surrounded it, and a heavy scent of twoleg and smoke lingered in the air.

"My owners and the rest of the campers light fires here and cook prey on it." Sugar murmured. Bravestorm shuddered, thinking of eating charred, smoky-tasting fresh-kill. Sugar meowed, "My brother and sister and I eat the parts that they don't cook, which they save for us three."

"Where are your brother and sister?" Icyfur asked.

Sugar flicked her tail toward a bright green tent. "That's where they both sleep. Honestly, they're both a lot nicer than me." She mewed, amusement covering her meow.

The kittypet began to walk away from the area. "Follow me, the cat who knew the one you're looking for is over here."

To Bravestorm's surprise, Sugar lead the warriors away from the twoleg settlement and toward a huge rock that had a crack running down the side of it, allowing for entrance to the inside. It reminded Bravestorm of one of the Great Stones, except for the crack. Two green orbs glinted from the darkness inside the rock.

"Sugar," a huge, firery orange tom stepped out into the moonlight. "Why have you brought me these cats?"

Sugar dipped her head, as if the ginger tom was her leader. "They have come to ask you questions, Flare." She meowed. Flare narrowed his eyes, but nodded.

"Very well, then." Was all he said as he lead the two warriors inside the rock.

Flare circled his nest carefully before settling down into it. He looked at the two cats with suspicious eyes, waiting for them to speak.

Icyfur was the first to speak up. "Sugar said you knew some things about a cat." He began.

Amusement flashed in Flare's eyes. "Of course, I know things about many cats!" He exclaimed. A purr came faintly in Bravestorm's throat. *At least this rogue is nice.*

"Well, we were wondering if you knew anything about a cat who was once named Fangheart?" Bravestorm meowed. Flare's eyes suddenly clouded with an emotionless expression. Bravestorm couldn't tell what he was thinking.

"Fangheart... Well, she came from a Clan. You're Clan cats, aren't

you?" He asked. Bravestorm and Icyfur nodded.

"Yes, she was in our Clan before we were born." Icyfur explained. Flare nodded, narrowing his eyes in thought.

"Well, what do you want to know?" He asked. Bravestorm and Icyfur exchanged a glance before Icyfur spoke up.

"What did Fangheart do after leaving her Clan, and where is she now?"

Silence followed the white cat's question. Bravestorm shifted her paws in unease. Flare's eyes glinted in the darkness.

"What makes you think I'll tell you where she is now?" He finally replied. A growl began to rumble in Bravestorm's throat, but she held it back.

"Fangheart is Bravestorm's kin." Icyfur pointed his tail toward Bravestorm. "We would like to meet her."

Bravestorm tried to contain her surprise, but she couldn't help widening her eyes in astonishment. Why hadn't Icyfur told her this before, and how did he have this information?

Flare looked at Bravestorm with eyes like slits. "Now that you say so, you do look similar to Fangheart." He admitted.

After a long sigh of reluctance, he spoke. "Fine, I'll tell you a bit about her." He meowed reluctantly. "She was a warrior of DawnClan many long moons ago, as you know. She left to become a rogue, like me." He paused. "We were mates, until she bore my kits. Then she left me and the kits behind and went away, changing her name to Fang before she left."

Slowly, like puzzle pieces, the situation all came together. Flare was the father of Sugar and her littermates. Fang was their mother, but she abandoned them and her mate. *Her heart has the cruelty of a fang; piercing the outside, and leaving deep scars on the inside.*

"I do not know where she is, but her scent has been found here before. I suspect she has come back." Flare meowed quietly.

Bravestorm dipped her head, followed by Icyfur. "Thank you." She meowed in respect.

The ginger tom in front of her dipped his head. "Anytime. It was a pleasure meeting you." He rasped. The warriors stood and exited the rock. Flare did not follow them.

Three cats sat outside the rock as Bravestorm and Icyfur padded back into the moonlight. One was Sugar, and there were two others who Bravestorm assumed was her brother and sister.

"Bravestorm, Icyfur, these are my littermates. This is Max," Sugar flicked her tail at a plump ginger tom with amber eyes; an identical match with his father, besides the plumpness. "And this is Abby." Sugar pointed at a tabby she-cat, also with amber eyes. The two kittypets both waved their tails at the warriors.

Bravestorm dipped her head in greeting. "It's nice to meet you, but Icyfur and I really must be going. We have to get back to camp before sunrise."

Abby dipped her head in return and purred. "I hope we can meet again sometime." She meowed respectfully.

Bravestorm and Icyfur made their way out of the twoleg settlement, with the help of Sugar. After saying one last goodbye, they crossed back into DawnClan territory.

Bravestorm was exhausted by the time she reached the camp. To her dismay, the rays of the sun were beginning to brighten the sky as dawn came. She settled into her nest, thanking StarClan that she wasn't scheduled for the dawn patrol.

Chapter 14

Bravestorm stumbled toward Highoaks in exhaustion. Her adventure with Icyfur caused her to lose many precious hours of sleep, making her feel very weary. *At least we got some good information,* she thought.

"Bravestorm, keep up!" Dustflight called over his shoulder. Then he muttered, "Great StarClan, you would think she didn't get any sleep!" Bravestorm drew her lip back in a silent snarl. *That's because I didn't, stupid furball.*

Quickening her pace, Bravestorm bounded forward to catch up with the patrol. "I'll lead." She offered.

Dustflight rolled his eyes. "Yeah, and we'll get back to camp by moonhigh." He growled. Bravestorm narrowed her eyes at him, but refused to respond to his comments. Instead, she silently took his place at the front of the patrol, thankfully without any protests from Dustflight.

Determined to prove her denmate wrong, Bravestorm lifted her tail and prowled through Highoaks at a much quicker pace than before. She was just beginning to feel less tired when Applepaw stopped her.

"Wait, I smell something!" He warned. Swiftheart, his mentor, padded toward him and sniffed at the clump of ferns by his paws.

"MoonClan," he hissed. "They've been stealing our prey!"

Bravestorm's pelt bristled. "How recent is the scent?" She asked. Applepaw sniffed again.

"Not more than a day old." He confirmed. Dustflight emitted a low growl from beside Bravestorm.

"We have to report this to Fogstar." Swiftheart meowed. "Applepaw,

hurry back and tell Fogstar to send a second patrol down here." He ordered his apprentice. Applepaw quickly obeyed his mentor and raced away toward camp.

We can't just stand out here in the open, what if they come back? Bravestorm looked around and found some ferns to hide in. "We should hide in there," she suggested, flicking her tail at the fern bed. "If they come back, we can jump at them without warning."

Dustflight nodded. "Smart idea." He admitted. The three cats padded into the shrubbery and waited anxiously for Applepaw to bring a patrol back.

Suddenly, yowling and spitting pierced the previously silent air. Bravestorm, Swiftheart and Dustflight hopped to their paws, alarm showing in their faces.

"That must be the second patrol!" Swiftheart realized as he dashed off toward the shrill noises. Bravestorm and Dustflight quickly followed.

Farther down the border of Highoaks, MoonClan and DawnClan cats battled fiercely under the trees. Blood was already spattered across the ground, turning the grass red.

Applepaw, Swiftheart, Fallenrain, Brownpaw, Rockclaw, and Fogstar were all among the DawnClan battle patrol. Shiverstar, Windyshell, her apprentice Rustpaw, Yellowtail, Lightningblaze, and Treeleg outnumbered them. Bravestorm, Swiftheart, and Dustflight charged into battle with their Clanmates.

Bravestorm raked her claws down the first MoonClan pelt that came into sight. Lightningblaze spun around to face her, his muzzle dripping with blood. A brief feeling of horror crept over Bravestorm, but she shook it away. *I'm here to battle!*

She quickly launched herself at the white cat, unsheathing her claws to scratch at his shoulders. Instead, she crashed into the ground as the large tom rolled out of the way with lightning-fast speed. *He'd be a good match against Swiftheart.*

Flowertail jumped into battle next to Bravestorm. The two sisters circled Lightningblaze, who was beginning to show confusion. Bravestorm leapt at the MoonClan warrior at the same time as Flowertail. Lightningblaze was caught in a fury of blows from the two warriors and he struggled to regain his balance.

Something barreled into Bravestorm, knocking her off her paws. She caught a glance of ginger-and-white blended together as a cat bit down on Bravestorm's shoulder, making her yowl in agony.

She wrenched herself free and turned to meet Shiverstar, who was spitting Bravestorm's fur from his mouth. "You!" She screeched, lunging for him. Her forepaw connected a blow to his muzzle, and the leader staggered backward. Bravestorm took this chance to jump onto his back and sink her claws into his pelt. An intense feeling of triumph flowed over Bravestorm as blood welled around her paws.

Shiverstar bucked his hips, throwing Bravestorm off of him. She landed on her side, which left her breathless for a few terrorizing heartbeats. A shadow loomed over the gasping she-cat, and sharp claws suddenly tore open her flank. Wailing, Bravestorm tried to get to her paws, but another cat shoved her down. Two cats, Shiverstar and Troutfur, began attacking Bravestorm ruthlessly.

Just when she though it was over, two cats raced toward the MoonClan warriors and pushed them away from Bravestorm, allowing her to drag herself away from the battle. She watched helplessly as Fogstar and Flowertail, the ones who saved Bravestorm's life, battled the toms with rage pulsing from every blow.

MoonClan was beginning to retreat, even without the orders of Shiverstar. Most of the warriors were too battered to strike another blow, from both DawnClan and MoonClan. Despite the rest of his Clan returning to their side of the territory, Shiverstar stayed and battled Fogstar.

Fallenrain and Rockclaw began to rush to her aid, but she halted them with a flick of her tail. "She wants to fight this battle alone." Swiftheart murmured to them.

The two leaders circled each other, snarling and spitting. Fogstar made the first move, rushing toward him and swiping her claws down his shoulder. However, Shiverstar returned the blow by raking his claws against her ear, tearing a chunk of it off. Fogstar gasped in pain, but she held her ground.

By now, Bravestorm was standing, despite her injuries. She watched in horror as Shiverstar struck another blow at Fogstar's head, which knocked her to the ground.

"You're a weak coward!" He taunted. Fogstar scored her claws down his stomach as he tried to bat his paws against her face.

The DawnClan leader got herself back to her feet, facing Shiverstar with a look of defeat. *No, don't give up! Send him yowling back to his camp,* Bravestorm silently urged.

Shiverstar advanced forward, his lips drawn back in a threatening snarl. He leaped onto Fogstar's back, pinning her to the ground.

"It's over, Fogstar! Say goodbye to your precious Clan!" He roared. Swiftheart, being the fastest cat in DawnClan, rushed forward to knock the bloodthirsty cat from delivering Fogstar's death blow.

Before Swiftheart reached him, Shiverstar sunk his yellow teeth into the back of Fogstar's neck. She let out an agonized yowl, which was cut short as her head fell to the ground and her yellow eyes glazed over.

Chapter 15

Swiftheart stopped in his tracks, his jaws parted in gaping shock. Stunned, Bravestorm almost dropped to the ground. Fury suddenly took control of her body, and she yowled with rage. Sprinting toward him, Bravestorm battered the MoonClan leader's head with full force, no mercy showing in her blows.

Shiverstar managed to sneak a hit in between Bravestorm's paws, which made her stagger backward. He used this chance to flee through the trees, back to his own territory.

"Foxheart!" Bravestorm snarled after him. Grief suddenly clouded her vision, and she stumbled toward the body of her leader. Fallenrain and Swiftheart were picking her up, preparing to take her back to camp. Bravestorm could only imagine the shocked faces of their Clanmates as they saw their dead leader.

The patrol padded grimly into the clearing, gasps and cries of shock and anguish coming from the Clan. Icyfur padded warily up to Bravestorm.

"What in the name of StarClan happened?" He asked in dismay.

"Shiverstar," Bravestorm spat the wretched name. "That's what happened."

Icyfur's eyes gleamed with anger. "That foxhearted murderer!" He growled.

Bravestorm caught a glimpse of a shocked Starlingstrike, his eyes glazed with sorrow. She realized that her previous mentor would have to become DawnClan's leader now.

"I didn't even know she was on her last life." Blueheart's voice drifted into Bravestorm's ears from across the clearing. "She still looked so young."

Feathermoon and Meadowfern brought mouthfuls of herbs from the medicine den, placing them around Fogstar's body to mask the scent of death. Meadowfern made her rounds to check over the cats from the battle, dressing their wounds. Feathermoon padded toward Starlingstrike, murmuring something in his ear. He nodded, but he looked as if he were only half listening to her. His eyes said that he was in a world of pain, shock, and grief.

Bravestorm padded toward the golden-brown tom, giving him a comforting lick on the ear. "You'll make a great leader." She murmured as she pressed her nose into his fur.

"I shouldn't *be* leader yet. Fogstar was too young to die." Starlingstrike muttered. Bravestorm shook her head.

"Fogstar served her Clan well, now it's your turn to serve it just as well. This is *your* Clan now, Starlingstrike." Bravestorm meowed reassuringly. A feeling of growth and maturity washed over Bravestorm, covering the grief and sadness. *I have to be brave enough to help my Clanmates through these dark times,* she told herself.

*****

Dusk was falling. Bravestorm watched as Feathermoon and Starlingstrike padded through the bramble barrier to travel to the Star Cave so that Starlingstrike could receive his nine lives. *He'll come back a strong leader,* she thought.

Bravestorm was eating a squirrel, but she found it hard to chew. The meat felt tougher, the skin hard to break. She assumed she was weak with sadness.

Meadowfern burst from the medicine den. "StarClan has sent an omen!" She announced. She was carrying the vole she had been eating in her jaws. Icyfur looked up at his sister in alarm. The cats in the clearing all raised their heads the listen to their medicine cat.

"The vole I had been eating was as tough as rock to chew. Is anyone else experiencing this?"

Bravestorm raised her tail, along with every other cat in the camp

who was eating fresh-kill. Meadowfern shook her head in dismay.

"StarClan has sent a clear message that times are going to get worse before they get better. The tough fresh-kill means that we have to make extra efforts to bring our Clan through the tragedies to come." Meadowfern's gaze rested on Bravestorm. *Does she know something that I don't?*

Desperate wailing sounded from the nursery. Sharpwhisker sat outside, curling her tail tightly around Orangekit. "What about my kit? Will he be okay?" She panicked.

Meadowfern padded toward the fretting queen. "We won't allow anything to happen to Orangekit." She promised. Sharpwhisker nodded, but she didn't look fully convinced.

As night fell, cats settled around Fogstar's body so they could sit vigil. Bravestorm seated herself near Fogstar's head, pressing her muzzle against the neck fur of the gray she-cat. Grief washed over her once again, and she sat a long, cold night, feeling lonelier than ever.

*****

Bravestorm lifted her head as the milky light of dawn began to stretch across the sky. Icefoot and Charredfur began to lift Fogstar's body, and Sleepyeye followed them so she could help with the burial.

Bravestorm dragged herslef to her nest, collapsing into it so that she could sleep. As she closed her eyes, she made sure to send a silent prayer to StarClan.

Thank you for the life of Fogstar .

Chapter 16

Two moons had passed since Fogstar's death, and so far rivalry between the Clans had gotten nothing but worse. SunClan had been caught stealing prey from DuskClan, ending up in a vicious battle between the two. DuskClan still distrusted DawnClan, and MoonClan was only becoming more and more bloodthirsty.

I'm beginning to think Meadowfern was right about the omen, Bravestorm meowed in her head.

"All cats old enough to catch their own prey please gather for a Clan meeting!" Starlingstar yowled from the top of the Highmound. Rockclaw, DawnClan's deputy, seated himself at the base of the Highmound. Orangekit scampered out from the nursery with an exhausted looking Sharpwhisker behind him. Dustflight and Blueheart sat together outside the nursery, twining their tails together. After having been mates for so long, Blueheart was at last expecting his kits. Applepaw, Firepaw, and Brownpaw stood in front of the Highmound, their pelts neatly groomed and eyes shining.

"These three apprentices have shown great skill in their assessments, and they are ready to become warriors." He announced. He spoke the usual words, and then leaped down from the Highmound to join the three apprentices on the ground.

"Firepaw, from this moment on you will be known as Firewhisker. Let your great energy and courage guide you, but not overpower you." Starlingstar rested his muzzle on the new warrior's head, and Firewhisker gave his leader's shoulder a respectful lick.

Starlingstar moved on to Brownpaw. "Brownpaw, from this moment on you will be known as Brownleaf. Use your wisdom and serenity to help soothe others who do not posses the same gifted traits." Starlingstar rested his muzzle on Brownleaf's head, and she gave him a lick on the shoulder.

Lastly, Starlingstar padded to Applepaw. "Applepaw, from this moment on you will be known as Applenose. Your patience and kindness set a good example for those younger than you." Starlingstar glanced at Orangekit before resting his muzzle once more on the warrior's head, and receiving a gentle lick on the shoulder.

"Firewhisker, Brownleaf, Applenose!" The Clan chanted. Bravestorm cheered with them, joy coating her meow. This was the happiest the Clan had seemed to be since the death of their previous leader. *Thank StarClan!*

Cats pressed around the new warriors, trying to congratulate them. Bravestorm padded up to them and gave them each a lick on the ear.

"You have done well," she meowed. "DawnClan is lucky to have you as warriors." Firewhisker's eyes lit up, as well as Brownleaf's. Applenose dipped his head to the older warrior.

"Thank you, Bravestorm." He murmured.

Flowertail and Spotface, who were now officially mates, came to congratulate the three warriors. Icyfur padded toward Bravestorm as she was backing away. "It looks like we won't have any apprentices for awhile." He mewed. Bravestorm realized he was right. Orangekit wasn't due to become an apprentice for another three and a half moons.

"Looks like us warriors will have to deal with doing some apprentice duties for a while," Bravestorm mumbled. Icyfur purred in amusement.

"Want to do some hunting, just you and I?" He asked. Bravestorm nodded, a purr rumbling in her throat. They exited the camp through the bramble barrier and headed for the Smallpond.

"I have a challenge for you," Icyfur stated when the two cats reached the Smallpond. Bravestorm tilted her head in curiosity.

"Okay, what is it?" She asked. Icyfur circled Bravestorm, then

draped his tail over her shoulders.

"Let's see who can catch the most prey before sunset. It will be a fair match, since we both have light colored pelts." He meowed, standing in front of Bravestorm.

Bravestorm tight for a moment. "Alright, deal." She decided. "We start now." Bravestorm raced off toward the trees, slowing when she approached them so that she didn't disturb any prey. She glanced over her shoulder to glimpse Icyfur's white pelt disappreaing into the trees on the opposite side of the Smallpond.

Bravestorm set herself into the hunter's crouch, sniffing the air for prey scent. The sharp tang of mouse washed over her tongue. Bravestorm spotted the brown creature scuffling among the fallen branches of an oak tree. Stalking toward it, Bravestorm made sure to keep her pawsteps light.

The mouse suddenly became alert, and Bravestorm froze. It soon resumed to scurrying around looking for food, and Bravestorm was able to advance forward. After waiting for the right timing, Bravestorm pounced on the mouse, ending its life with a quick bite.

She buried it to pick up later and carried on hunting. By sunset, Bravestorm had a good pile of at least ten pieces of fresh-kill by the Smallpond. However, judging it against Icyfur's, it looked like he had more prey than she did.

"I think you won." She meowed. Icyfur let out a triumphant yowl. Bravestorm's whiskers twitched in amusement.

"At least the Clan will have plenty of fresh-kill for quite a while." Icyfur meowed. Bravestorm nodded.

The two cats were silent for a moment. Icyfur suddenly padded up next to Bravestorm and brushed his pelt against hers. Her heart began to quicken in pace as Icyfur leaned against Bravestorm.

Her emotions overpowering her, Bravestorm nuzzled her nose into Icyfur's pelt. She breathed in his rich scent, a purr rising in her throat. Bravestorm felt vibrations against her muzzle as Icyfur

began purring, too.

"I've waited a long time for this." Icyfur murmured. He bent his head to lick Bravestorm's forehead. She twined her tail with his, her purr growing louder. She enjoyed the feeling of Icyfur's lean muscles against her pelt.

"Me too." Bravestorm agreed. The two sat in silence for a while, staring out at the Smallpond and enjoying each other's presence.

"Bravestorm, will you be my mate?" Icyfur suddenly asked.

Without hesitation, Bravestorm replied, "Yes, Icyfur, I'd love to be your mate."

Chapter 17

Bravestorm watched Orangekit as he prowled through the camp, puffing his chest out. He had just learned that he would be earning his apprentice name in only a day. Bravestorm suppressed a purr as Orangekit nearly bumped into a growling Dustflight.

"Bravestorm!" Starlingstar called from the entrance to his den. Bravestorm rose to her paws and padded toward her leader.

"Yes, Starlingstar?" The golden tom gestured for her to enter his den. Bravestorm did so, watching as her leader settled himself in his nest before speaking.

"I think it is time you've had an apprentice." He announced. A wave of surprise and excitement crashed over Bravestorm.

"Really?" She asked. "I'll be mentoring Orangekit?"

Starlingstar nodded, his whiskers slightly twitching. "You have proved to be a mature and worthy warrior. You deserve an apprentice." The tom meowed. Pride swelled in Bravestorm's chest.

She dipped her head to her leader. "Thank you, Starlingstar. I am honored."

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"Orangekit, you will now be known as Orangepaw, until you receive your warrior name." Starlingstar glanced at Bravestorm. "Bravestorm, you are ready for an apprentice. You are fearless and loyal to your Clan, and I expect you to pass on these traits to Orangepaw."

Bravestorm padded forward to touch noses with the newly made apprentice. He seemed ready to burst with excitement as his cool nose came in contact with Bravestorm's.

"Orangepaw!" The Clan cheered. Sharpwhisker sat in front if the nursery, yowling her son's new name proudly. Rockclaw sat next to her, a look of approval showing in his features. Mousekit, Blackkit, and Volekit; Blueheart's recently born kits, sat outside the nursery with envious looks on their faces.

"Are we going to see the borders?" Orangepaw mewed once the cats had congratulated him. Bravestorm purred, remembering how excited she had been on her first day as an apprentice.

"Of course, let's go now." She answered. Orangepaw trotted through the bramble barrier next to his mentor, holding his tail high.

Bravestorm first took Orangepaw to the Tall Oak, followed by the twoleg settlement and then Highoaks. Bravestorm's pelt instinctively bristled at the thought of the battle that had killed Fogstar.

"If there's any MoonClan warriors lurking on the other side, I'll shred 'em!" Orangepaw hissed. Bravestorm lashed her tail.

"As long as they stick to their side of the border, we don't bother them. MoonClan is a dangerous Clan to cause trouble with." Bravestorm warned. Orangepaw relaxed his tensed muscles and nodded. He cast one last glance at the border before following his mentor onward.

Bravestorm taught her apprentice about the Moon Spring and the Star Cave. He gazed up the Mountain Path with a look of astonishment. "How will I *ever* be able to climb that high?" He asked in disbelief. Bravestorm emmited a *mrrow* of laughter.

"Don't worry, it's not actually that far." The she-cat assured him. Orangepaw nodded, but he didn't seem convinced.

"Lastly, this is the—" Bravestorm cut herself off as she approached the Smallpond. The sight in front of her made her frozen with horror. *Badger!*

"Orangepaw, run back to camp and fetch a patrol!" She ordered her apprentice. Orangepaw quickly obeyed, dashing off toward the

camp with the speed of lightning.

Beavestorm whsirled around to face the badger. By now it had noticed Bravestorm, and it was slowly advancing toward her. Its bulky body lumbered toward her clumsily.

Bunching her muscles, Bravestorm prepared for a possible battle. The badger snarled and quickly launched itself forward, slashing its claws dangerously close to Bravestorm's face. She leapt back just in time before they hit their target.

Yowls pierced the air as Icyfur, Swiftheart, and Rubyfoot darted through the trees. Bravestorm sprung onto the badger's back as a look of confusion spread over its face.

Icyfur began slashing wildly at the badger's face. Swiftheart darted around the badger, nipping nimbly at the creature whenever he could. Rubyfoot sliced a deep wound down the badger's shoulder.

Terror struck the badger, and it flung its body around to swipe at one of the cats. His huge claws planted into Icyfur's shoulder, sending him skidding to the ground. Bravestorm gasped as the badger let out a ferocious roar, and raised up on its hind legs to slam its forepaws on Icyfur's head.

Swiftheart dashed forward and knocked the badger to the ground before he could crush Icyfur's skull. Bravestorm joined him and threw blows at the badger's head. It wailed and tried to scamper away, but the action was in vain. Rubyfoot finally sent it running toward DuskClan territory with a final scratch to its leg.

"That should teach it not to make its home in *our* territory." She spat. "DuskClan have a little treat coming their way."

Bravestorm rushed over to Icyfur, who was laying on the ground in a heap. She helped him to his paws, noticing the limp that showed when he walked. Letting the white tom lean against her, Bravestorm lead him back to camp with Swiftheart and Rubyfoot trailing behind.

Feathermoon was waiting at the bramble barrier when the group

returned. She breathed a sigh of relief when she saw that there were no major injuries. She closely inspected Icyfur's shoulder before applying a poultice to it and telling him to rest.

Bravestorm was about to help Icyfur to his nest when Feathermoon beckoned her toward the medicine den. Bravestorm cast a reluctant glance at her mate as Swiftheart helped him instead.

Bravestorm followed Feathermoon to her den, where the two cats settled in the grassy clearing. Feathermoon gazed at Bravestorm before speaking.

"The bloodthirsty fang will destroy the courageous storm." She meowed the prophecy unexpectedly. Bravestorm froze. She knew what courageous storm meant; it was herself. But, who— or what —was the bloodthirsty fang?

"What does it mean?" Bravestorm asked timidly. Feathermoon shook her head, a sign of saying she didn't know.

"Your death is coming soon, Bravestorm. There is no denying it."

Grief enveloped Bravestorm. How is she supposed to save the Clans if she dies? Or does she die saving the Clans? *StarClan put me in this position for a reason,* she thought. *They know I can handle it, and I need to prove that.*

"If this is the price I have to pay, for the sake of the forest," Bravestorm meowed, straightening her posture, "Then so be it."

Chapter 18

Bravestorm woke up in the warriors' den with the bright sunlight shining through the lichen. She sat up and gave herself a thorough wash before making her way into the clearing.

Icyfur sat with Spotface and Flowertail, eating a shrew. Bravestorm went and retrieved a mouse from the fresh-kill mound and joined the three cats in their chatter.

"Rockclaw wants to launch an attack on MoonClan." Flowertail informed. "He and Starlingstar are discussing it right now." She added, casting a glance at Starlingstar's den.

"Like an ambush?" Bravestorm asked before taking a bite of the mouse.

"Something like that," Spotface replied. "But honestly, I don't think it's worth it." Bravestorm could smell the fear that came off his pelt in waves, and she couldn't bring herself blame him. MoonClan had caused many traumas for DawnClan already.

"I think MoonClan should be shown a lesson." Tigerfang piped up from behind Bravestorm. He rested his tail on his daughter's flank as he settled down with the group of cats.

"We need to be careful, though." Spotface countered. "Shiverstar wasn't afraid to kill Fogstar, it's likely he won't be afraid to destroy the whole of DawnClan."

Bravestorm nodded her head in agreement. "Spotface has a point, but if we keep letting MoonClan go unpunished then they'll become even more dangerous and bloodthirsty. Eventually, we won't be able to keep them under control anymore."

Icyfur nodded his head once. "Shiverstar isn't afraid to drive all of the Clans from the forest, if that's what it takes to feed his hunger for blood."

Golden movement caught Bravestorm's eye, and she turned to see Starlingstar leap onto the Highmound. He yowled for a Clan meeting, though the majority of the Clan was already in the clearing.

"Cats of DawnClan," he shouted. "Rockclaw and I have decided that we will launch an attack on MoonClan after the Gathering tonight." Bravestorm saw Meadowfern dip her head in disappointment. A blast of excitement lit up Tigerfang's eyes. Dustflight let out a yowl of triumph, while Blueheart wailed in agony.

"There will be two patrols." Starlingstar continued. "Rockclaw, Dustflight, Tigerfang, Bravestorm, Applenose, Icyfur, and I will make up the first patrol. The backup patrol will consist of Swiftheart, Firewhisker, Fallenrain, Lilycloud, Flowertail, and Whiteshade." He meowed. "Everyone else will stay back at camp to help guard it."

Sharpwhisker let out sigh of relief when she heard that Orangepaw wasn't going to participate in the battle. However, the apprentice had a look of disappointment on his face.

"Bravestorm, I want to fight!" He exclaimed. She shook her head.

"Orangepaw, you barely know any moves. It's too dangerous for you, maybe next time." She assured him. He nodded, his tail drooping as he padded toward the apprentices' den.

Meanwhile, cats were protesting the decision for the attack on MoonClan. "What if they decide to attack our camp? We'll hardly have any warriors to defend the nursery or the elders' den." Blueheart fretted. Dustflight pressed his body against her's.

"Don't worry, we'll shred them. They won't dare set paw on our territory for a long time." He promised. Blueheart looked as if she wanted to protest, but she bit back her next comment.

"We're going to attack the heart of their territory; their camp. The first battle patrol will attack the cats, and then the second patrol will come in and destroy the whole camp. It sounds vicious, but they've done worse things to us in the past." Starlingstar explained.

Many cats nodded their heads in agreement, while others had looks of disapproval. Bravestorm caught Feathermoon's eye. There was a knowing look in her gaze as she looked away from Bravestorm.

"Great StarClan," Icyfur muttered. "This isn't going to end well." Bravestorm pressed her nose into her mate's fur.

"Don't worry," She soothed. "Starlingstar knows what he's doing."

Icyfur sighed. "I hope so, because if we lose this battle DawnClan will be crow-food."

As the Clan dispersed from the Highmound, Bravestorm found herself listening to the conversations of her Clanmates. She gazed around the camp as she eavesdropped on the cats around her.

"Starlingstar is out of his mind!" Blueheart hissed to Rubyfoot. "If Fogstar were still in leadership, she would have declined war against MoonClan."

Rubyfoot unsheathed her claws against the soft ground. "MoonClan needs to be taught a lesson. We need to avenge Fogstar's death!" She retorted.

Blueheart shook her head in dismay. "So much blood will be spilt this night." She mumbled, most likely to herself.

"I can't wait to get my claws on those mangy MoonClan cats' pelts!" Bravestorm fixed her attention on the conversation of Dustflight and Whiteshade. "Shiverstar will wish he never set a paw on Fogstar." He snarled.

Whiteshade shook her head. "MoonClan just has a bitter leader. Why should we take it out on the whole Clan, when really the treachery is coming from Shiverstar alone?" She reasoned, her tail lashing from side to side. Dustflight narrowed his eyes at her.

"Are you saying you don't want vengeance for Fogstar's brutal death?" He asked accusingly. Whiteshade hesitated.

"I— I didn't say *that!*" She defended. "I just don't think we should punish the whole Clan for something their leader did, not them."

She mewed quietly. Dustflight snorted as he turned away from her to talk with Tigerfang instead.

Bravestorm saw something in Whiteshade's eye. There was a gleam of deceit in her eyes, deceit and betrayal as she glared around the camp. A gasp almost escaped Bravestorm's lips as the white and gray cat's gaze rested on her. Whiteshade snarled and quickly turned, padding toward the warriors' den.

After that experience, Bravestorm intended never to trust Whiteshade again.

Chapter 19

"I'm nervous." Flowertail admitted as she lined up near the bramble barrier next to Bravestorm. They were preparing to go to the Gathering, and then attack MoonClan afterward. A vague feeling of uncertainty settled into Bravestorm's heart.

"Trust me, we all are." Bravestorm assured her sister. Sleeyeye was murmuring something into Charredfur's ear from beside Bravestorm.

"The Clan is leading itself to doom!"

Orangepaw bounced excitedly next to Bravestorm, unaware of the concerned chatter do the elders. "My first Gathering!" He exclaimed. Sharpwhisker purred from beside him as she gazed down at her only son.

"I'm so proud of you." She purred.

Starlingstar yowled for the Gathering patrol to follow him as he began leading the way through the bramble barrier. Rockclaw padded close to his side as they refreshed each other on the plans of tonight.

A certain thought was nagging at Bravestorm; the talk she had with Feathermoon only days ago. *Your death is coming soon, Bravestorm.* The words drifted into her thoughts. Could she be walking into her own death so soon? Would this battle with MoonClan lead to the end of her life?

Bravestorm glanced up at the withering leaf-fall leaves of the forest. If this was the last time she would see them, she wanted to savor it. She breathed in the rich smells of the forest for possibly the last time as she followed her Clan toward the Moon Spring.

"Are you okay?" Icyfur asked as he twined his tail with Bravestorm's as they walked. A pang twisted her heart, knowing she'd likely

never see her mate again. She had secretly hoped to have kits with him after she saved the Clans. *I have to be strong. For Icyfur, for Blackstream and Fogstar, for DawnClan.*

"Bravestorm?" Icyfur prompted.

"Uh, I'm fine." She lied. Icyfur gave his mate an unconvinced look, but kept his mouth shut.

The DawnClan cats ascended the Mountain Path until they reached the Moon Spring. Bravestorm heard Sleepyeye let out a pained grunt as she tried to scrabble up the last rock. She reached down and grasped the old cat's scruff in her teeth, pulling her up with a mighty heave.

"My bones are getting too old for this." She rasped. Bravestorm purred as she walked with the elder down the slope leading to the Moon Spring.

The first thing to catch Bravestorm's eye was Marshfoot, who had been a warrior for a few moons now. He was strolling toward her with a cream colored she-cat next to him.

"Bravestorm, I have an apprentice now!" He exclaimed. Bravestorm felt a twinge of guilt as she remembered she'd be attacking his Clan after the Gathering.

"That's great! I have one too, though I don't know where he's been off to." She replied. As she spoke those words, Bravestorm caught sight of a tawny furred tom picking his way toward her through the crowd of cats. *There he is...*

"Bravestorm!" He called as he padded toward her. "Can you introduce me to some other apprent—" Orangepaw cut himself off when he noticed Marshfoot's apprentice. He strolled toward her, his eyes sparkling as he dipped his head in greeting. She did the same as a purr rumbled in her throat.

"I'm Orangepaw." The DawnClan apprentice meowed.

"And I'm Palepaw." The cream she-cat replied. The two apprentices padded away, talking quietly. Their pelts brushed too close to one

another for Bravestorm's liking.

"Apprentices these days," Marshfoot muttered, though his voice was filled with amusement. Bravestorm let out a short *mrrow* of laughter.

Smokestar yowled from the DuskClan Great Stone, signaling for the Gathering to begin. Cats all around Bravestorm began to settle onto the floor of the hollow. Icyfur padded toward Bravestorm to sit next to her, while Marshfoot sat a few tail-lengths away from the pair.

"Thunderstep, DuskClan's previous deputy, has passed due to a bout a greencough." Gasps and murmurs of shock washed over the forest cats.

"He would have made a fine leader." Bravestorm murmured to Icyfur. He hummed in agreement.

"However, the sickness has passed and DuskClan is still strong. Our new deputy is Largefang, and we also have a new warrior Clearmist."

All the Clans chanted the names of both Largefang and Clearmist. Bravestorm saw Clearmist, a sleek white tabby she-cat, and immediately admired her beauty.

"DuskClan also has new apprentices; Skypaw, and Fernpaw!" The DuskClan leader yowled. More cheering, and then Rainstar stepped forward.

"SunClan is now thriving, since the rock slides have come to an end." Bravestorm heard a DuskClan cat snarl from a few fox-lengths away. Clearly the two Clans were still angry about the border skirmish a few moons ago.

"We also have two new warriors, and three new apprentices. Stickypelt, Shadewing, Snowpaw, Larkpaw, and Twigpaw." Rainstar announced.

The night carried on with cheering as Shiverstar announced two new warriors, Rustpelt and Mudface, then the new apprentice, Palepaw. Starlingstar pointed out Orangepaw, while the Clan cats

seemed to be enjoying themselves. Bravestorm nearly forgot about the well-planned attack on MoonClan that very same night.

After the Gathering was over and the Clans were fanning out and catching up on things, Bravestorm met and talked to Stickypelt and Shadewing alongside Icyfur.

Bravestorm was in the middle of asking how Stickypelt had gotten his name, when something caught her eye. Whiteshade. She was talking with Amberfang at the edge of the hollow. Bravestorm strained her ears to listen, but she could barely make out her words over the meowing of other cats.

The only eords she could pick out were, "Surprise... Prepare... Battle."

That was all Bravestorm needed to hear for her to know that Whiteshade was a traitor.

Chapter 20

Bravestorm fell in step beside her leader as they walked back to camp. Starlingstar didn't want to look suspicious to the other Clans, so he decided to act like he was leading his Clan back to camp. Really, he was going to send the elders and any extra cats that weren't assigned for the battle away toward the camp, while he and the patrol veered toward MoonClan territory.

"I must speak with you." Bravestorm meowed to her leader, quiet enough so no other cats would hear.

"What is it?" Starlingstar asked impatiently. Bravestorm guessed he was anxious for the upcoming ambush. She couldn't blame him for snapping at her.

"It's Whiteshade, I overheard her talking to Amberfang. I... I think she tried to warn her about our ambush." Bravestorm lowered her voice even more. Starlingstar's eyes went wide with horror.

"No, she couldn't have!" He hissed. "I will not believe that my Clan is full of traitors!"

Concerned looks came from the cats behind Bravestorm, causing her to involuntarily stiffen. She swallowed nervously as she willed Starlingstar not to say anything else about the matter.

"I could have mistaken, that's just what I think I heard." Bravestorm tried to calm down her leader. Though, deep down she knew what she heard. Whiteshade had betrayed DawnClan and there was no denying it. Poor Bravestorm just couldn't find a way to tell Starlingstar without provoking him even more.

Starlingstar, who was now twice as anxious as before, reached the point in DawnClan's territory where it was time for the Clan to split up. The elders and the cats who weren't assigned to battle carried on toward home, while the battle patrol started toward MoonClan territory.

The cats stalked warily across the open Flatlands, praying to StarClan that the darkness of the night was enough the keep them hidden from view. Their ancestors had blessed them by faintly covering the moon with misty clouds as the Clans were heading back to their own territories. They must approve of this ambush.

The cats from the first patrol were lead by Starlingstar, while the cats of the second patrol were lead by Swiftheart. Other than the soft breaths of her Clanmates and the quick padding of their paws on the grass, Bravestorm couldn't hear hardly a sound. No cat dared to speak.

Starlingstar raised his tail to halt his patrol when they neared the MoonClan camp, which was hidden in a deep valley between two high hills. Bravestorm's breath caught in her throat as she realized she could be plunging down into a trap, along with her Clanmates. *I wouldn't be worrying about this if it weren't for Whiteshade spilling our plan,* Bravestorm thought angrily.

"Swiftheart, wait for my signal to join the fight. It will be a battle cry." Starlingstar hissed to the leader of the second patrol. "Remember, unless you're attacked, focus on destroying their camp." Swiftheart nodded, his muscles tensing as he anxiously awaited the ambush.

Starlingstar cautiously crept forward, waving his tail for his patrol to follow him. Bravestorm followed closely behind Rockclaw, who was behind his leader. Icyfur growled with apprehension from beside Bravestorm.

Starlingstar peered down the slope that would lead them into the heart of MoonClan's territory. Bravestorm instinctively bunched her muscles in case a MoonClan cat sprang from the undergrowth, but nothing happened.

Starlingstar gave a final nod with his head, a flick of his tail, and the first patrol launched themselves down into the valley.

Before they had even reached the middle of the camp, hissing MoonClan cats had sprung out from their dens, their fur bedraggled from sleep. *Why weren't they ready for us?* Bravestorm thought

quizzically.

Starlingstar came to a halt in front of a bristling Shiverstar.

"Have you forgotten about the peace truce, Starlingstar?" He spat.

"The peace truce doesn't apply here!" Starlingstar growled. "Besides, since when have you cared about peace?"

Shiverstar yowled and flung himself at Starlingstar. The two leaders rolled in a yowling heap along the ground. DawnClan warriors began attacking any MoonClan cat they could get their claws on. Bravestorm whirled around to find Crowtalon. He hadn't noticed her yet, and she took this chance to take him by surprise.

She lunged toward him, swiping her claws down his hind thigh. He staggered backward, stunned for a brief moment, as Bravestorm sunk her claws into his flank. Crowtalon quickly regained himself and tried to shake the she-cat off of him, but she was too clever. Bravestorm leaped around him, nipping once at his tail. The tabby tom snarled at her, his rank breath hitting her muzzle. He scored his claws down the DawnClan warrior's shoulder, causing her to cry out. She struck a blow to his head with unsheathed claws, causing blood to run down his face and into his bird-like eyes.

Deciding she'd done enough to him, Bravestorm turned away from Crowtalon and launched herself at the next nearest cat; a long-limbed brown tom. Bravestorm recognized him as Treeleg as she was shedding the fur from his spine. He yowled and rolled onto his back, crushing Bravestorm under him. He flipped onto her shoulders and dug her muzzle into the ground, causing grit to full her nose and mouth. Yowling, Bravestorm bucked her hips and sent Treeleg flying into the air.

Bravestorm stood up and quickly turned to face Marshfoot. He stared at her wide-eyed. Bravestorm remembered Dirtpelt, and how he never spoke to her again after she attacked him. Surely Marshfoot would understand, right?

Bravestorm hadn't had any more time to think before a cat barreled into her. Bravestorm saw a flash of ginger pelt claw at her ear,

causing blood to drip down onto her shoulder. She glimpsed Amberfang out of the corner of her eye.

"You're going to die!" She yowled as she tried to sink her teeth into Bravestorm's neck. She braced herself for the death blow, but it didn't come.

She looked up to see Marshfoot battering Amberfang, his own Clanmate, on the ground next to her. Shock and fury burst in Amberfang's eyes. She sprung up, flinging Marshfoot off of her with a mighty blow. She fixed her target on Bravestorm, slashing at her with her claws as she backed Bravestorm toward one of the dens.

Bravestorm saw triumph glint in Amberfang's eyes as she looked at something behind her victim. Suddenly a huge force knocked Bravestorm off her paws. Shadowscratch, a huge gray tom and the deputy of MoonClan, loomed over her. Blood bubbled at his lips as he yowled victoriously, rearing up onto his hind paws.

Feathermoon's dream suddenly flashed through Bravestorm's mind. The dream of her own death, many moons ago when Bravestorm was still an apprentice. This matched the description of her dream exactly.

Black paws slammed down on Bravestorm's chest, knocking the breath from her. Again, Shadowscratch reared up and slammed his paws down, this time hitting Bravestorm's skull. Bravestorm's vision went fuzzy, and the last thing she saw was a clear white pelt rushing toward her, yowling in anguish.

One final blow from Amberfang connected with Bravestorm's head, and the world went black.

Chapter 21

Bravestorm awoke in the Flatlands of MoonClan territory. However, starry pelts shimmered around her, instead of blood and battling Clan cats. Bravestorm almost gasped, staring in awe at the starry cats in front of her. Her body felt weightless, her lungs needless of breath. *So this is what it feels like to be dead,* she thought.

Above her, the sky was crystal clear. The moon shone brightly, however it suddenly turned blood red and quickly dipped below the horizon, leaving only the glimmering bodies of the StarClan cats to provide light in the field. Bravestorm realized this must be what Starlingstar saw when he dreamed at the Star Cave with Bravestorm — Bravepaw back then. *MoonClan will fall, MoonClan will fall,* a voice chanted in her head.

"Bravestorm," a long unheard, yet familiar voice cut through the chanting. A black and white pelt, speckled with stars, stepped out from the ranks of StarClan to welcome her.

"Blackstream!" Bravestorm rushed toward her mother, pressing her own muzzle against hers. A purr erupted in both cats' throats as they greeted each other.

Grief suddenly washed over Bravestorm, and she pulled away from her mother. "I've failed you," she meowed. "I've failed you, StarClan, the forest, everyone!" She meowed, throwing her head back in a wail of agony.

Blackstream shook her head. "You've not failed anyone." She told her calmly as she flciked her daughter's ear with her tail.

Bravestorm sniffed. "But I didn't save the Clans."

"No, maybe not. That's why I'm giving you a second chance."

Bravestorm stared, puzzled with her mother's words. "How can that

happen? I'm dead!"

Another pelt, this time a thick gray one, stepped out in front of Bravestorm. *Fogstar!*

"Bravestorm, this will be hard for you to understand, but we're sending you back to live among the Clans." She meowed padding over to rest her tail tip on Bravestorm's shoulder.

"Like a reincarnation?" Bravestorm asked. Fogstar shook her head.

"No, we cannot reincarnate a cat like you." Bravestorm frowned, trying to figure out what Fogstar meant.

"I am going to give you my life, so you can live in the forest again." Blackstream explained.

"What?" Bravestorm asked after a moment of silence. It didn't make sense to her; how could she have another cat's life? She wasn't a leader...

"This is a rare gesture, actually its never been used before. Normally when I cat is dead, they're dead for good. However, you are such an important cat that Blackstream has offered to give her life to you, so that you may live in DawnClan again." Fogstar meowed. Blackstream padded toward a confused Bravestorm.

"I, Blackstream of StarClan, offer my life in the stars to Bravestorm of DawnClan. She deserves a second chance at life, to fulfill her true destiny as a warrior. I pass on my blessings to you, Bravestorm. Use my life wisely, for this is a generous gift." Deep sadness flooded Blackstream's green eyes as she touched her nose to Bravestorm's.

Bravestorm felt life seeping into her soul, from her nose all the way to her tail tip. Her lungs suddenly felt the need to breathe again, her paws began to feel heavier with weight.

All too late, Bravestorm realized with horror that Blackstream had given up her only life in StarClan for her daughter to walk among the Clans once again.

"No, Blackstream!" She called as her patchy pelt began to fade in

front of her.

"I love you, Bravestorm. Make me proud." She meowed her last words, her voice faint and far away. The last thing to fade were her mossy green eyes, piercing deep into Bravestorm's soul before Blackstream was gone forever.

Bravestorm also felt herself falling and fading. "Go now, Bravestorm. Save the Clans and fulfill your destiny." Fogstar's wise voice sounded in her ears.

"I'll never forget you, Blackstream." Bravestorm whispered before her vision went dark.

Chapter 22

Bravestorm felt herself being carried by two cats when she awoke. Thorns snagged at her pelt, almost as if she were going through the bramble barrier. She shut her eyes to avoid getting them scratched.

"Oh no, Bravestorm!" she heard Orangepaw wail. More yowling erupted within her Clan.

"How is she dead? There's hardly a scratch on her!" Rubyfoot exclaimed. *StarClan healed me,* Bravestorm thought.

"She was too young!" Blueheart's distressed mew rang out in the clearing. Bravestorm's body was placed in the center of the clearing. Feathermoon's sweet scent suddenly washed over her as the medicine cat stood over her.

"Bravestorm, wake up. I know you're alive," she whispered. Bravestorm obeyed, lifting her head to meet the shocked gazes of her Clanmates.

"Bravestorm!" Flowertail mewed with relief as she rushed toward her sister. She pressed her muzzle against Bravestorm's cheek and purred happily. Icyfur joined them, pressing his nose into Bravestorm's soft white-and-gray fur and inhaling deeply.

"That wasn't a funny joke, Bravestorm," Starlingstar growled as he leaped onto the Highmound. Bravestorm began to bristle.

"It wasn't a joke!" she defended. "I went to StarClan. I saw them, I did." Fresh memories of Blackstream flooded Bravestorm's mind. The pain of knowing she'd never see her mother again, knowing she wouldn't be watching over her daughters anymore, was unbearable.

"Bravestorm?" Flowertail asked as she let Bravestorm lean on her shoulder for support. "What's wrong?"

Bravestorm took a deep breath, praying to StarClan that her Clanmates would believe her. "Blackstream passed to me her StarClan life so that I could live again. She said it was my destiny, and I needed to complete it. Her last wish was for me to make her proud, and that's just what I'll do, even if she'll never be able to watch me do it," Bravestorm meowed, lifting her chin to her leader.

To her relief, Starlingstar dipped his head. "I understand now," he meowed. "Bravestorm, let Feathermoon check you over, and then come to my den. I wish to speak with you."

Bravestorm nodded to her leader before padding with Feathermoon toward the medicine den. Icyfur began to follow, but Feathermoon shooed him away with her tail. He gave Bravestorm a wistful glance before turning and heading toward the warriors' den.

"I need thyme leaves," Feathermoon called to her apprentice. "And a poppy seed." Meadowfern nodded before picking up a few of the small green leaves and a gray-brown seed. She passed them to the older medicine cat, giving Bravestorm a sympathetic look before going back to organizing herbs.

Bravestorm obediently lapped at the thyme leaves when Feathermoon set them in front of her. "You need rest," she commented as she held out the poppy seed for Bravestorm to lick up.

"But I need to talk to Starlingstar!" Bravestorm argued.

"Starlingstar can wait."

"I could be urgent!"

"If it was really that urgent, Starlingstar wouldn't have sent you here first."

"But–"

"Enough, Bravestorm. You shouldn't be challenging a medicine cat," Feathermoon gave the warrior a stern look. Bravestorm looked at her paws and nodded. She reluctantly laid down in the moss, aware of Feathermoon watching her as she rested her head on her paws

and closed her eyes.

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Bravestorm awoke to the sounds of soft murmuring in the back of the den. She barely lifted her head to make out the outlines of two cats; Feathermoon and Meadowfern.

"I always knew this would happen; that she would die and come back again," Feathermoon meowed.

"Why did you never tell her?" Meadowfern asked.

"I don't want to tell the poor cat her entire future!" her mentor hissed. Then she sighed. "Look, Bravestorm needs to find out what lays ahead for her on her own."

Before she could listen to anymore of the conversation, Bravestorm stretched and let out an obvious yawn so the two cats could know she was awake. Feathermoon rose to her paws and padded toward Bravestorm.

"How do you feel?" she asked.

"Much better," The warrior replied. "Do you think I could speak with Starlingstar now?"

Feathermoon nodded. "I think that would alright," she answered as she walked with Bravestorm to the entrance of the medicine den. She watched Bravestorm walk toward the leader's den with an unreadable expression, yet there was a certain sadness to it that Bravestorm could sense.

"Starlingstar?" She mewed when she reached the hollow in the side of the Highmound.

"Bravestorm, is that you?" He rasped, his voice thick with sleep. It was moonhigh, after all. Bravestorm realized she could have waited until dawn to meet with him, but it was too late for that now.

"Yes," she responded. "It's me." Starlingstar let out a welcoming grunt, signaling for Bravestorm to enter.

"How are you feeling?" He asked, resting his amber gaze on the tabby warrior as she sat in front of him.

Bravestorm shrugged. She had only told Feathermoon she was doing well so she could get out of the medicine den. "Honestly, I don't know if I can do this anymore. Everything seems to be going wrong," she meowed, shaking her head.

Starlingstar sighed. "I know, Bravestorm. We're all hoping that things will begin to get better from now on, but I fear they will not." His amber eyes glinted. "For now, though, I have a feeling MoonClan will lay off the attacks for awhile," he paused. "Shiverstar lost a life in that battle. It's not long before he's gone from the forest —for good," he meowed, somewhat triumphantly.

"We both know Shiverstar. He won't leave without a fight, something to remember him by," Bravestorm voiced her worries. She wondered if she should share what she heard in StarClan: *MoonClan will fall, MoonClan will fall,* but Starlingstar didn't give her a chance.

"You're a wise and brave cat. I trust what you say, Bravestorm," he meowed as he stood up. "There is more I would like to say, but it is late. We should both get some rest."

Bravestorm dipped her head in agreement with her leader. She left his den, waving her tail at him as it slipped through the curtain of vines.

Though she wasn't tired, Bravestorm crawled into the warriors' den and laid down in the nest next to Icyfur. She wished she could curl up beside him, but she didn't want to wake him. Instead, she rested her head on her paws and wrapped her tail over her nose. She stared up at the stars of Silverpelt through a crack in the den wall until the milky light of dawn began to cover the sky, and she could no longer see the stars.

Epilogue

Bravestorm padded into camp with fresh-kill swinging from her jaws. Orangepaw, Icyfur, and his apprentice Mousepaw, followed her. They all laid their prey in the fresh-kill mound, which was already overflowing. Newleaf was bringing plenty of prey for DawnClan; times were easy for the whole forest.

Four moons had passed since the ambush on MoonClan. So far, the vicious cats have kept away from trouble with the other Clans. *StarClan knows how long that will last for,* Bravestorm thought.

"Orangepaw, how would you like to head out for some battle training?" Bravestorm asked her apprentice. The ginger-and-brown tom's eyes lit up almost instantly.

"I'd love to!" He exclaimed. Then he added sheepishly, "Could Mousepaw come with us?"

Bravestorm suppressed a chuckle. "As long as Icyfur's up for it." She told him.

She watched with amusement as Orangepaw scampered off to ask Icyfur if he would bring Mousepaw to the training hollow. Flowertail came to stand beside her sister. "He's got a lot of energy." She commented, flicking her tail to point at Orangepaw.

Bravestorm nodded. "Almost too much; I'm finding it hard to keep up with him." Flowertail laughed, a noice that was music to Bravestorm's ears. Laughing would have been an uncommon thing just moons ago, and now it seemed like a normal thing to do. So much had changed in such a little amount of time.

Blackpaw, Flowertail's apprentice, padded toward the two warriors. "I cleaned out the elders' bedding." She mewed, dipping her head to her mentor. The little apprentice reminded Bravestorm so much of her mother, Blackstream, who sacrificed her own life for her

daughter. It was truly a gift from StarClan to have Blackpaw among the Clan.

"Thank you," Flowertail meowed. "You can go get some rest now, if you'd like." She told her apprentice. Blackpaw nodded, a grateful look in her eyes as she turned toward the apprentices den.

"She's a good cat." Flowertail murmured. Then she suddenly turned to Bravestorm, an intense look of excitement showing in her features. "I almost forgot to tell you," She exclaimed. "I'm expecting Spotface's kits!"

A mixture of shock and joy overpowered Bravestorm's emotions. "That's wonderful!" She meowed. "But what about Blackpaw's training?"

Flowertail sighed. "I'll likely have to move into the nursery before she's a warrior. I'll have to pass on her training to someone else." She answered. "It's a shame, really. I would have loved to have mentored her completely. I guess I should speak with Starlingstar about it." With that, the black-and-white she-cat turned away and walked toward the DawnClan leader's den.

Bravestorm turned to meet Orangepaw and Mousepaw as they trotted toward her. "Icyfur said he'd be here in just a heartbeat." Mousepaw called as she lashed her tail impatiently.

Marshfoot padded out from the warriors' den, his white-and-brown mottled fur sleek and freshly-washed. He had been exiled from MoonClan when Amberfang told Shiverstar about his betrayal; when he tried to save Bravestorm by attacking her. After the pleading of Bravestorm, Starlingstar finally decided to allow the former MoonClan warrior to join DawnClan. Many cats questioned his loyalty for several moons before finally accepting him as a trustworthy warrior of DawnClan. Now, any cat would think DawnClan was his Clan of origin.

"Have you seen Volepaw?" He asked as he picked a rabbit from the fresh-kill pile. Marshfoot was one of the only cats in DawnClan, besides Swiftheart, who was fast enough to catch a rabbit. That was MoonClan's most common fresh-kill, since they lived in the plains.

"He went on the dawn patrol with Rockclaw and Rubyfoot. He should be back anytime." Bravestorm answered. Marshfoot only nodded before padding away to eat his rabbit.

Icyfur soon appeared beside Bravestorm, and the group set off toward the training hollow. While the apprentices weren't paying attention, Icyfur briefly brushed his pelt against Bravestorm's and gave her ear a quick lick. She purred as she gaze at her mate, which caused him to purr in response.

"C'mon you two, I want to show you a new move!" Orangepaw called impatiently. Bravestorm rolled her eyes as she followed her mate into the training hollow.

As mentors taught apprentices, Bravestorm wondered what could possibly happen to ruin the peaceful state in the forest now. Even MoonClan, who had been such a vicious and unforgiving Clan, was beginning to show a sense of tranquility. Maybe Shiverstar had changed; maybe he'd finally found that battle is not the answer.

Little did Bravestorm know, this was just the beginning...